

## **A history of Jewish literature.**

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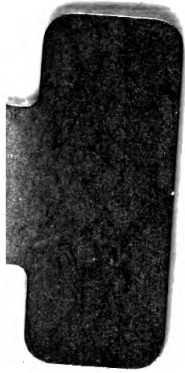




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# A HISTORY OF JEWISH LITERATURE

Volume V





# A HISTORY OF JEWISH LITERATURE

Volume V

FROM 1935 TO 1960

by

MEYER WAXMAN



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To my grandchildren  
Jonathan, David, and Hillel Waxman  
and Abigail Perlman,  
this book is affectionately dedicated



## PREFACE

PREFACING THIS FIFTH VOLUME of *A History of Jewish Literature* I find it necessary to make a few remarks regarding its content. In spite of the fact that the title page bears the legend "From 1935 to 1960," which means that the volume is supposed to deal only with the short period of twenty-five years, I found it difficult to cover the subject in as extensive a manner as I would have liked. For one thing, the adding of a fifth volume to four bulky preceding ones made certain limitations advisable.

More important, although Jewish literary activity in most European countries was greatly diminished during this period and in a number of them ceased altogether, the total output has been surprisingly large. To a great degree, this is due to the exceptional literary activity in the State of Israel. As a result, the survey has been restricted to the works of authors who, on the whole, made their debut during this period, and works produced after 1935 by writers whose contributions were discussed in the preceding volume have been omitted. An exception was made with the later works of the American Hebrew poets whose muse began to flourish several years before 1935, since their contribution came to fruition after that year.

Nor has there been an attempt to deal with all works produced during this period. Since a selection had to be made, the author chose only those works which impressed him as adequately reflecting the literary climate of the period. It is quite possible that he erred in his selection, but such is the fate of all men, for no one can escape error.

It is the author's belief that though this volume may, in certain respects, be incomplete, its total contents are a valuable complement to the entire set. It completes a series which mirrors the soul of a people during twenty-five hundred years of its life. For these volumes present a kaleidoscopic picture of the trends and currents which characterized the inner life of the Jewish people during a long period,



## PREFACE

beginning with the return from the Babylonian exile, succeeded after several centuries by a second more devastating exile which scattered the people to the four winds of the world, and ending with the return of this people after two thousand years, to its ancient land—an event unparalleled in the entire history of humanity. During this long period, as these volumes demonstrate, the book was the portable fatherland of the people, the sustaining force of its survival, and the prime factor in the regaining of its ancient land.

In conclusion, the author extends his thanks to institutions and persons whose services facilitated the preparation of this volume. These are: the library of the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, its librarian, Dr. Edward Kiev and his assistants, Mrs. S. Tabor and Mrs. C. Markush; the library of the Yivo Institute, and its assistant librarian, Miss Dina Abramowicz.

New York, November 1959

MEYER WAXMAN

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. *JEWISH LIFE IN THE PERIOD*

Two great events took place in the life of the Jewish people during the last twenty-five years. One is the great catastrophe which befell a large part of European Jewry during the Nazi regime, which resulted in the annihilation of six million Jews—more than two-thirds of the entire Jewish population of that continent. The catastrophe also destroyed, with the exception of a few smaller Jewish communities, all centers in Central and Eastern Europe.

The second event is the coming into being of the State of Israel, a partial realization of the dream of ages. As is known, this realization did not appear suddenly. It took more than seventy years from the first attempts made by men of spirit and vision to turn the age-long yearning for the return to the ancient land, hitherto expressed only in prayers and rituals, into a movement for resettlement in that land.

The steps of the first stage of that movement, the limited efforts of the lovers of Zion to resettle in the ancient land, the impetus given to it by Herzl, which not only changed the name of the movement to Zionism but endowed it with a world-wide horizon, and the Balfour Declaration, the cornerstone of the future State, are well known. Its influence and its reflection in literature have already been chronicled in the preceding volume.

The extent and intensity of the influence of the movement on Jewish life in its various phases rose higher and higher in its second stage, beginning with the end of the First World War and its destructive effects upon the life of the European Jewish centers. The religious and cultural life in Russia was paralyzed with the very rise of the Communist regime, while Polish Jewry began to feel the heavy hand of hatred even in the early twenties of the century. Within half a decade the ground began to tremble under the feet of the Jews of Germany with the rise of Nazism. On the Jewish horizon, covered by heavy dark clouds, there was only one ray of light, Palestine, then

under British rule by a mandate of the League of Nations. The Mandatory Power recognized the Jewish historical right to that land. To that bright beacon there began to stream large masses of Jews from Central and East European countries fleeing before the storm. Rays of the light of Palestine also penetrated into the ghettos of the Jews of Yemen and North Africa, bent under the yoke of persecution and age-long suffering, and overwhelmed by a wave of hatred spreading through the Arab countries. Waves of migrating Jews streamed toward the tiny point of light; and as a result, Jewish settlement in the ancient land grew by leaps and bounds.

The struggle for the possession of the promised homeland began, a struggle of many phases and facets. There was the struggle to conquer the desolation of the land; to turn the desert-parched soil into flourishing grain-bearing fields; to drain the swamps, sources of malaria; to plant trees in the crevices of rocks; and to pave roads. There was also an inner struggle, that of adjustment of tens of thousands of immigrants whose lives had been spent in cities and towns, and who had been weaned from the soil for millennia, to a totally new life—to tilling the soil, to raising cattle, planting trees, and hewing stones for roads and buildings.

Nor was there lack of struggle in the realization of ideals. The pioneers—young men and women, strangers in the lands of their birth, swept away by a whirl of ideas and ideals, that of socialism and many other isms, and in search for a new and better life, flocked to Palestine to renew their own life and the life of their brethren. They started to rebuild the land, not only through hard labor, but also through the introduction of the kind of life they yearned for, one in which all should work and all should share the fruits of their labor, a communal life—the life of the Kibbutz. Hard was the labor, many were the tribulations, and numerous the failures; but strong was the will, dominant the ideal and the resolve to make sacrifices. All these helped the pioneers to strike roots in the land.

Love and devotion to the land grew with the rise of a new generation who were born and bred there and who took their place in the ranks of the builders and strugglers. With greater force the settlers prepared for the final struggle against the Arabs and the Mandatory Power. The more the Jewish population increased, the stronger the hatred of the Arabs grew. Time and again it broke forth in wild, sporadic attacks in various parts of the land, resulting in massacres, burned settlements, and pillage. The old and young rose heroically

to defend their homes and their fields, their wives and children. Many young lives were lost in open fight or in ambush, but others came to take their place. Boys and girls left the schools and joined the defenders of the homeland. When immigration was openly barred by the Mandatory Power, it flowed secretly and stealthily. Ships arrived in the darkness of the night, carrying refugees from the four corners of the world to the only place where they could find shelter and freedom. The government attempted to stop this stormy influx in vain, the arms of loving brothers reached the wanderers even amid the raging breakers. The young men of the various rebellious groups, whether *Palmach* or *Azal*,<sup>1</sup> carried the weary men, women, and children to the safety of the shore on their backs and hid them in their homes and shelters. The struggle grew more and more severe; violence was met with violence, ambush with ambush; neither prison nor exile stopped it, until the voice of the landless nation was finally heard by the United Nations. The small State of Israel was established, and weary Britain left the land.

Ere the song of victory on the lips of the strugglers was silenced, and ere the joy in their hearts ceased to well, a new storm arose. Muslim rulers of Asia and Africa joined hands; armies of fanatical Arabs and hordes of Bedouins spread like locusts on the borders of the tiny State to stifle its existence and erase its inhabitants from the face of the earth. A war of liberation was fought; the old spirit of the Maccabees arose, and again a miracle took place; the many fell at the hands of the few. And not only was the tiny newly born State saved, but its boundaries were widened. Israel opened its gates to the persecuted brethren. Magic carpets, in the guise of aeroplanes, moved in many directions to bring the pillaged and exiled Jews from Muslim territory to a land where their ancestors had lived for millennia—the new homeland. The population grew by hundreds of thousands and new life began to sprout, a life of many colors, where East meets West, where Jews speaking different languages, practicing different customs and age-long habits of life, slowly and gradually merging into one people by means of a revived time-hallowed language and the help of the government of the Jewish State. Struggle continues, but the great dream, the realization of partial redemption, has reached

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<sup>1</sup> *Palmach*—initials of the words *Plugat Mahaz* or commando groups. *Azal*—initials of *Anshe Zwa Leumi* or Men of the National Army.



its end. The landless people have found a place on the map of the world and a role to play in the life of the nations of the world.

This brief survey of the kaleidoscopic picture of the rise of the State of Israel presents only one side of the great panorama of Jewish life during the last twenty-five years. There is another, sadder aspect, one of deep tragedy—the effects of the great catastrophe. Hardly more than a decade has gone by since it ended, but many decades will pass before its horror is obliterated from the minds and hearts of world Jewry. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were fortunate to escape from the ghettos and concentration camps, but they did not reach the shores of Israel.

They fled to distant lands—South America, Australia, even China and Japan. With the help of their brethren, they were enabled to adjust their lives externally, but in their hearts and souls there dwells eternal pain and torture. In their ears there still echo the cries of their nearest and dearest being led to the gas chambers. Before their eyes there still rises the smoke of the high chimneys of the crematories where parents, brothers and sisters, and children were consumed. Many of these refugees, overcome by disease and suffering, were unable to reorder their shattered lives. They wander like shadows in the lands of their refuge.

However, those who have succeeded in adjusting themselves to their difficult environment and have struck roots there, have attempted to rebuild not only their own personal lives but also their communal Jewish life. Communities, some large but mostly small, sprung up and spread over wide vistas of South America, Australia, parts of Africa, and even in places where the foot of a Jew had never trod. In this partial rebuilding of Jewish life, the exceptional power of the Jew to overcome all obstacles in his fight for life, a power gained by the millennial struggle for existence, was displayed at its best. Thus, shadow and light interchange in the life of world Jewry and form the many-colored panorama of that life during the last twenty-five years.

## 2. *GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LITERATURE OF THE PERIOD*

That the literature of the period reflects to a great extent the kaleidoscopic panorama of Jewish life in both of its aspects goes without saying. The reflection is especially evident in Hebrew and Yiddish literature which form the bulk of Jewish literary activity.

But even the literature produced in other languages bears the marks of that panorama.

The life of torture and suffering, the massacres and death scenes in the ghettos of Eastern Europe and in the German crematories serve as themes for numerous short stories, novels, and poems. They also form the subject of many historical works, written as literary memorials to numerous Jewish communities, which were scattered in the former great centers of Jewish population.

The tragic episodes and events in the concentration camps are also portrayed in stories and poems in which the worst and best in human character are delineated with greater or lesser skill. These portrayals, although seen in Jewish literature in all languages, are especially numerous in Yiddish literature, in which they form a dominant theme. The reason is that many of the younger Yiddish writers who share in its literary productivity are refugees from East European centers and have themselves experienced the terrors and suffering of the catastrophe and witnessed with their own eyes the tragic and heart-rending events and episodes.

The case is different with Hebrew literature, which has its main center in Israel. While a number of young writers, refugees from the ghettos and concentration camps, found a home in the ancient Jewish land and gave voice to their experiences in stories and poems, the bulk of that literature primarily reflects the struggle for, and realization of, the birth of the State of Israel. The themes deal to a great extent with heroic efforts in the acquisition of the country, the making of it into a real homeland, and the glorification of toil and labor in the beloved home. All of these express the soul-gripping striving of the people, especially that of the younger generation, to become a part of the very soul of the land.

If, for the moment, we were to leave out the influence of the above-mentioned two factors, Hebrew literature would be, as far as its general trends are concerned, a continuation of those trends dominant in the preceding period, embracing the first three decades of the present century. Its main currents are primarily secular in character, even to a greater degree than that of the former period. The great catastrophe and the scattering of the Jewish masses to the four corners of the world, as well as the gradual realization of the dream of a homeland that was to be like all other nations, increased the spread of secularism. On the other hand, both factors also produced the op-

posite effect. The memories of those who suffered martyrdom, as well as the heroism of the Palestinian Jews in their struggle for the land, and the rise of a new Jewish culture strengthened the appreciation of Jewish values and Jewish culture.

The result is that, while the literature of this period is on the whole a secular one and displays much of the centrifugal tendency that is the deviation from the millennial traditional life of Jewry, there are also factors at work which tame the force of that tendency. The revival of the Hebrew language, the holy language of tradition, of the land with its sacred and historic memories impressed on its very soil, infuse into the literature a suggestion of centripetalness which is strengthened by the effects of the catastrophe. The very destruction of a well-established traditional life in the ancient centers casts a halo of romanticism on its form and evokes a longing for that life which is gone, never to return.

Moreover, there is a minor current in that literature which also bears the stamp of the millennial tradition. Even the orthodox groups were affected by the great changes in Jewish life. They learned that the survival of Jewish tradition is dependent upon organization and propaganda, and like all other groups, employed the medium of literature for that purpose. Not only have the orthodox-minded writers entered the field of essay and historical writing, but also, to some extent, of belles-lettres. As a result, a number of belletristic works, both prose and poetry, are imbued with a deep religious spirit.

Another trait of this literature is the echo of the new life, both in the Kibbutz, where the individual is only a part of the community, and in the colonies and private settlements. There we find skillful portrayals of love scenes in the fields and places where men and women work together, along with scenes illustrating man's affection for the animals he has bred and nurtured. Nor is city life neglected. The colorful "gathering of the exiles," the mingling of brethren separated for ages by distance, language, customs, and rites, the episodes of adjustment to one another, and of strangeness and affection, occupy an important place in this literature.

That the literary creativeness of the period is not limited to belles-lettres goes without saying. There has been great productivity in the field of historical studies, Jewish law, and philosophic and even mystic speculation. In fact, due to the establishment of the State of Israel and the gathering of the exiles in the ancient land, such efforts, primarily in Hebrew, have vastly increased.

### 3. CENTERS OF JEWISH LITERATURE

The shift in the centers of Jewish literary productivity which had begun in the preceding period, after the First World War, has become more and more evident during the last twenty-five years. The catastrophe practically wiped out the important literary centers of Poland and Germany. The creative activity of Poland which, during the two decades after the First World War, had produced a large number of literary works, ceased almost completely. Only a few works in Yiddish, saturated with the dominant spirit of communism, were published from time to time. The same fate overtook the Central European countries, Germany and Austria, where during the period after the First World War, activity was carried on mostly in German and, to some degree, in Hebrew.

No completely new centers have been founded during the last quarter century, but those which had already made their appearance in the preceding decades greatly increased their productivity, and of these Israel became the largest center of literary creativity. Yiddish literature found refuge in a number of countries where it continued with renewed vigor to a greater or lesser degree. France is the only place on the continent of Europe where, due to the large influx of Jewish immigration, a limited productivity in Yiddish has been carried on. The American output of Yiddish literature grew, owing to the increasing number of East European writers who settled in the country. However, its growth was limited by the environment to which the great masses of Jews became adjusted, and though they are still speaking the language, they have estranged themselves from the literature, while their children hardly understand Yiddish. The real centers of Yiddish literary productivity now are the Jewish settlements in the South American countries, especially Argentina. A large number of East European Jews migrated to those countries during the last twenty-five years. Besides, those who settled there earlier remained loyal to the mother tongue and not only speak Yiddish, but also continue to read its literature.

As for Hebrew, although a certain amount of literary work is produced in almost all the Jewish centers, the main center of that literature is Israel. Considering that Hebrew is the official language, spoken by at least 90 per cent of the Jewish inhabitants, and that all subjects of the educational system are taught in Hebrew, including all branches of science, it is no wonder that the literary productivity

is exceptionally great. It is estimated that not less than five books a day, or about fifteen hundred a year, are published in Israel, where the Jewish population is barely two million.

However, this literature should not be judged merely by its quantity, but primarily by its variety and quality. There is hardly any branch of literature which is not cultivated in that country. As for the quality, we must remember that the gathering of the exiles, which has been going on for several decades, was not only a gathering of the masses, but also a gathering of men of thought and knowledge. Many of them were distinguished men of letters; others, leaders in various sciences, in philosophy and kindred subjects. Hitherto, their talents and skills were devoted to works in other languages, but when they took refuge from the great storm in tiny Israel, Hebrew became the means of literary expression. If some still find it difficult to express themselves in that language, there are always capable translators at hand.

The birth of the State of Israel brought about a realization of the adage, "People of the Book," applied by Mohammed to the Jews. In Israel, thirst for books is no longer limited to scholars and students. The desire for learning, which has almost become a racial trait, was once more revived in Israel, though its expression underwent great changes. Comparatively few Israelis pore over the heavy volumes of the Talmud and codes, but mainly over the endless variety of secular books; yet the desire is there and serves as an impetus for great productivity. I said comparatively few Israelis, but not all. The gathering includes tens of thousands of Jews to whom the Talmud and all other Rabbinic works are still not only the spice but the very bread of their spiritual and intellectual life. Likewise there is a great increase of Talmudic and Rabbinic scholars gathered from all centers of the Diaspora, and as a result there is considerable productivity in these branches of Jewish literature. Taking all the factors into consideration, we can verily call the land of Israel a great center of all forms of Jewish literary activity in this latter period.

## PART I

### Belles Lettres and Essays, Hebrew and Yiddish





## CHAPTER I

### HEBREW POETRY

#### 4. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

There was much poetic production during this short period, for the larger group of distinguished bards, who were discussed at length in the preceding volume, were not forsaken by their muse and they continued to cultivate the field of poetry and to enrich it with poems and songs. Then there arrived into the field new aspirants for poetic laurels, men and women of the younger generation, and they began to cultivate it. Some came from the Diaspora, and, invigorated by the climate of struggle for the acquisition of the land and the joy at the birth of the State of Israel, their poetic spirit found voice as they began to sing. More were born and bred in the land of Israel, and they participated both in the struggle and in the victory. Courting the muse, they gave expression to their experience in verse. And thus the poetic production grew to larger proportions in this short period of twenty-five years.

Since the Hebrew poetry produced on the soil of Palestine or Israel forms 90 per cent of the Hebrew poetry of the period, it follows that its character is stamped to a large degree by the experiences which the bards themselves underwent or witnessed—struggle and joy in Israel's victory. I said to a large degree, for we must not forget that the echo of the effects of the catastrophe, which annihilated a third of world Jewry and uprooted a still larger number, is also heard in that poetry, especially in the poems of the singers whose life had deep roots in the Jewries of the Diaspora. As a result, the national element predominates in its content.

However, the individual aspect is not absent. A number of poets sing primarily of their reaction to the world and life, to the beauty of nature and to the charm of love and the pleasure and pain it brings in its wake. A few echo in their poems a thirst for the quietude and

calm which religion brings to a troubled heart, and express their desire for shelter and refuge from the tribulations of life in the shadow of the presence of God.

As for the range of the poetry, it differs, on the whole, from that of the post-Haskalah period described extensively in the preceding volume. It contains a large number of lyrical poems, but hardly any historical narratives, and no epics. The turbulence of the age made it impossible for the poets to acquire the calmness of spirit and the broadness of conception required for the production of an epic.

The fixed limit of space and the nature of this volume, which intends merely to survey the literary range of the period by selected illustrations of its various branches, prevent me from dealing with the complete poetic production of the period, especially with the part contributed by the distinguished bards whose poetry was discussed at length in the preceding volume. I must limit myself to selection from the works of a number of poets who made their debut during the period, in order to illustrate the character of the poetic spirit and its trends during the last twenty-five years.

### 5. S. SHALOM

A prolific poet of the younger group of bards whose poetic spirit was nurtured on the soil of Palestine, absorbing the pain and joy of the struggle of a wandering people for resettlement in its ancient land, is S. Shalom. His poetry is, therefore, to a large extent the trumpet of both the struggle and its successful completion—the founding of the State of Israel. I say to a large extent, for his songs, centering on the national revival of his people, form only one aspect of his poetic genius. It has also another phase, the varied life of man, such as his relation to the world, to his fellow man, and to his own purpose in life. These songs, too, are dominated by the spirit of struggle, both of the individual and of the group, in clarifying the ideals toward which they strive, and in finding the way to realize them. He can therefore be described, on the whole, as the poet of the life of man, of the individual, and also of the group of which he is a part, which in his case is the people of Israel.

As a result, the life of man sung about by this bard is greatly limited. It is the stormy life of constant striving and meager realization; of restlessness and sorrow rather than joy, peace, and love. On the whole, there are few love poems in his large collection of songs. Those in which woman occupies a considerable amount of space sing

more of passion than of love. Neither the beauty of the beloved nor delicacy of feeling are reflected in them. Likewise, though he says in one of his poems, *Keter Malkut* (Crown of Kingship), that this crown which symbolizes his poetic spirit was presented to him by the high mountains, the blue seas, and starry heavens, there are no real nature poems in his many songs. The muse of his poetry sings mainly of the storm and struggle in the life of man.

Leaving his home, the house of a Ḥassidic Rabbi in Galicia, at the age of nine, and thrown together with thousands of refugees in Vienna, he spent his adolescent years amidst suffering and oppression, while simultaneously feeling the pull of the Viennese atmosphere. As a result, a conflict was created in the young soul of the poet. Even in the days of early manhood, during the 1920's, there was no lack of suffering in Vienna, where hatred of the Jews increased from day to day, nor did the early pioneering days in Palestine afford much joy and tranquility. Those experiences impressed themselves upon the budding poet and molded his poetry. His early work is marked by a note of sorrow and despair. He sings of the twilight hour when ideals lose their charm and the light which they emit is dimmed, or of man's continual search for a purpose in life, for a light in the distance—a search in which some are consumed, while to others the seeking and longing is a continuous prayer. This motive is repeated time and again in various short poems. At other times, though, the longing and striving appear to him in a different light, constituting the very essence of life, and he advises his heart to accept the joy as well as the sorrow which life may bring.

#### BIBLICAL POEMS

To this period belongs a group of poems which move us with the depiction of Biblical episodes, as well as by the love with which they are saturated—love of the poet's people and of mankind. Of special value is the poem *Moses' Hands Are Heavy*, portraying the moment (Ex. XVII: 9-16) when Moses stands on the mountain with uplifted hands, praying for Israel's victory in the war with Amalek, as before him pass scenes of the future battles of his people throughout history with the eternal Amalek, symbol of all that is evil in the human heart. It is this panorama which makes his hands heavy, but with the strength of his spirit he keeps them aloft until the victory is won. He tells Joshua to inculcate in the hearts of his people the will to carry on through the generations, without hesitation and despair, the war with

Amalek, the war of God against all evil. The panorama itself is masterfully drawn.

Much art and thought are employed by the poet in another poem, *The Prophet and the Youth*, depicting the revival by the prophet Elishah of the dead son of the Shunamite woman (II Kings, 4:8-12). The miracle is somewhat dimmed, but the light of the love of man and the desire to do good shine in full glory. Elishah, moved by the death of the young boy representing the coming generation, endows him with his own voice and the power of his own hands, and is even ready to give him the last spark of his life's spirit. The youth rises, but the prophet remains only a shadow.

#### NATIONAL POEMS

On settling in Israel during the 1920's, Shalom is overpowered by love for his people and the dream of their return to the ancient land. It had always been part of him, for his early youth was spent not only in a Hassidic, but also in a Zionist home, that of his grandfather, the Rabbi of Drohobitz, one of the first Zionists. In the land of his dream, his muse becomes, as I have said, his trumpet of the realization of that dream.

Many are the poets who dwelled on this theme, but there is a special note in the national songs of Shalom. It is not the general glorious dream of the ages of which he sings, but the great struggle for the attainment of its aim through labor, sacrifice, and devotion by the hundreds of nameless pioneers who, step by step, plowing, sowing, standing watch at night, and defending their work with their own bodies, redeemed the land. Shalom's muse is the mouthpiece of the pioneers, of the multifarious, painful, and quiet labors, of their martyrdom for the land they love, as well as of their exultation in the realization of their dream. In this lies his glory and strength. In one of his early songs, *ha-Shomer* (The Watchman), he says, "I sing, though only the scattered bushes hear my song; I am happy, though I know that many are the fiery eyes of the enemies from the Bedouin tents that look at me; though malaria-carrying flies circle around me, I stand on guard of a new life, I guard and sing." Very moving is a short poem, *When a Man Dies*, written in memory of an unknown pioneer killed in the Valley of Jesreel. The valley, to the poet, is the holy of holies where no one weeps. There is no tombstone on the pioneer's grave, but the light of the stars glimmer like candles over the lonely place.

A number of Shalom's poems, written in the years 1936 and 1937, rise to great poetic height. These were the years when Galilee was attacked by the Arabs, when terror reigned in the land and death stalked abroad, but the work was carried on with gun in hand by day; the fields sown and harvested in the stillness of the nights. Shalom sings of the builders of Galilee and records the deaths of those who fell to the ground where the footprints of the defenders of Yudfeth still remained, whose lips murmured, "It is good to die in Galilee." He glorifies the work of the sowers by night who cried to the moon for help when the sun failed them, saying, "Shed thy light so that the sowers may see their way." He adds his own prayer, saying to the moon, "Holy is the seed; guard thou its growth and guard the sowers from a straying bullet and a lurking knife." In his poem, *The Blessing*, in which he rejoices at the fruitfulness of the land, he enthusiastically turns to the earth and says, "Earth, thy life we shall live, thy feasts we shall celebrate. In thee we will strike root by tilling the soil. Labor is the ladder by means of which man rises, and work is the star of life, the vision of glory, and the tent of peace." In abounding joy he concludes, "Let there be a chain joining man, plant, and earth together."

Shalom knows not only the heroism of the pioneers, but also the deep tragedies they endured, which he expresses in a short poem, *A Child Cries in the Forsaken Home*. The child cries for his father, and again, with trembling voice, for his mother, but there is no answer. The poet asks, "Does he sense that his father died in defense of the land? Did a bullet pierce the heart of his mother when she went to milk the cow?" He concludes

A child cries in the dark,  
But there is no God nor man to answer the cry.

The loving heart of the poet was smitten with grief and terror at the fate of his brethren in Europe during the years 1939-45, and it uttered a piercing cry at this unparalleled tragedy, a cry which reverberates in a number of moving poems. These poems are grouped together under the name *Alon Bokut* (Oak of Weeping, Genesis, 35: 1). The most heart-rending of these are *Rabbi Mendel* and *My Uncle Rabbi Abrele*. In the first story, the sainted rabbi, as he was being led to his death, asks his fellow Jews, who are digging their own graves, for a cup of water. He repeats his request, and one Jew breaks out of

line and brings the water to him. The Rabbi washes his hands and repeats his confession to God, and when the order to fire is given, a smile lingers on the Rabbi's lips, for there was a Jew who, on the brink of death, dragged himself forward on chained feet to show his love for his brother. The second poem is an imaginary interview with his uncle in the Warsaw ghetto. In the interview the heart-rending details are narrated, illuminating the greatness of the souls of the tortured, the gassed and the poisoned.

Despite the cries of anguish at what had been done to his people, the love of man is not entirely extinguished in his heart. In one poem he prays, "God guard me from hating my brother man," and concludes, "Help me see in him a spark of light, so that I may know that even in me all is not extinguished," a remarkable expression of love.

Shalom wrote long dramatic poems and novels on serious philosophical subjects, but his greatness lies in his poems on the life of man and the life and fate of his people.

#### 6. ISAAC SHALEV

The poetry of Isaac Shalev, one of the leading bards of the younger group, can be characterized by his own lines at the end of the last song in the second volume of his collected poems. He sings:

I love your voice, voices of many men,  
I love the song of men more musical  
Than the melodies of all instruments.

*Kolot Enosh Hamim* (Warm Human Voices) is not only the title of this song but of the whole collection, and rightly so, for the warm voice of love for human life in its various phases is heard in much of the poetry in this and other volumes. The life he glorifies in his song is the ordinary life experienced by every man and woman, but he succeeds in discovering in it much beauty and pathos. Thus, in a poem called *Shir ha-Heder* (The Song of the Room), when he recalls the time when his mother used to send him to the room where his baby sister, who later died, was sleeping, to see whether the red-flowered quilt covered her, he injects a note of tragic beauty. He tells us, "When I visited her grave, I saw that she is still covered with the quilt, but a quilt of earth, decorated with red and blue flowers."

He casts a halo of beauty upon the simplest episodes of life, especially family life, as in *The Song of My Oldest Son*, in which he catalogues the physical and emotional changes in his son from birth to adolescence, and wonders at these changes; or in *The Children Sleep*, which concerns the care and worry of the parents for their offspring; or in *The Father Sighs*, which expresses the wonder of the child at hearing his father sigh at night. All these reveal not only the memories and the feelings of the poet, but of all people, parents and children, and the love between man and woman in their youth, and love in old age. Primarily, they show the role played in life by love, and in this lies their strength and meaningfulness. His description of the panorama of life in which his portrayals of nature are integrated with these expressions of love correlates the beauty of the episodes of life with the beauty of the land of Israel. The group of poems portraying the moments of love in his life, from his childhood to the end of adolescence, are especially charming not only in recreating the pure beauty of young love, but in presenting a gallery of portraits of life in old Jerusalem and the glory of its natural surroundings.

The bond between man and nature is continually expressed in Shalev's poems. In a group devoted to trees—the fig, oak, olive, and pine among others—each one is endowed with human qualities. The broad-leafed fig represents the sweetness and softness of femininity; the oak, the strength and hardness of masculinity; while the age-old olive tree symbolizes to the poet the wisdom of the aged which, like the oil of the olive, kindles light and drives away darkness. The pine, with myriad needles and wide trunk, he calls the lyric poet of the trees, for when the wind blows through its branches, he hears its song.

In a long poem, *Or Al Ginosar* (Light on the Valley of Genesareth), Shalev glorifies the history of Galilee. He tells most charmingly of a group of young soldiers who travel through a large part of Galilee while the sights of nature dotted by the landmarks of history, unroll before them. The many points of interest, Pekiin, Safed, Meron, with their wild beauty and historic aura, pass before the reader in majestic glory as the beauty of nature and the halo of the past are united. *The Song of the Cave of the Primitive Man* is especially captivating. It depicts historic events which took place in the cave or entrance. Beginning with primitive man, there follows a long series of events—the worship of Baal by the Canaanites, the



destruction of the Baal by Elijah; later, the hiding of Jewish warriors from the Romans in this and in neighboring caves; and, finally, the appearance on the scene of present-day Jewish heroes. The poem concludes with the arrival of the soldiers at the Sea of Kinereth, where their first vision is of fishing boats putting out to sea.

His poetry displays other motifs besides, the love of his people and their struggle for freedom and a peaceful, productive life. In one poem, *Kol Anot*, he calls upon the Jewish youth of Israel, wherever they live, and whatever their faction, to prepare to defend the land, freedom, and way of life of the Jews. He likens the land of Israel to an island in a stormy sea and its settlers to Robinson Crusoe. He says to youth, "Know that there is no other island for this new type of Robinson Crusoe."

His love for the pure type of human life inspired a number of poems in which he satirizes the new form of life in Israel, especially government circles. The poem, *Shushelet Melakim Hadashah* (New Dynasty of Kings), is a bitter satire upon the administration and its army of clerks and secretaries. Shalev would like to see a warmer human spirit in the government offices and more reverence for men of intellect. He also bewails the lack of faith and religiosity. He expresses his desire for a change in the life of Israel in *Lail Abraham* (The Night of Abraham), in which, basing himself on the Midrashic story of Abraham searching in the stillness of the night for God and His light in the world, he longs for a similar night during which he, the poet, should find that light and bring it once more to the modern world.

His love of man, the prime motif in his poetry, urged him to remind his people of the greatness often revealed in human actions. In his poem, *ha-Adam be-Regaim ha-Gedolim* (Man in His Great Moments), he calls attention to such moments of greatness. At times, the greatness is expressed in the action of the judge who frees the wrongly accused prisoner; at other times, in the operation performed by the surgeon in saving a life; and again, in the heroism of men who save a human being from a burning building, or from a raging river at their own peril. These actions, says the poet, which often pass unnoticed, enhance the human race. Thus reverberates the warm human voice in Shalev's poetry.

#### 7. ZERUBABEL GILEAD, LEAH GOLDBERG, JOSEPH LICHTENBAUM

Zerubabel Gilead is one of the younger poets, born in Israel, who

experienced the dual struggles of the Israelis—the conquest of the land by toil and labor, and the defense of that treasured land against the enemy before and after the birth of the State. The main theme of his poems, collected in two volumes, *Prihat ha-Aronim* (Flowering of the Pines) and *Nahar Yarok* (Green River), is love of the land and the struggle for its defense. He sings therefore with great charm in short lyrical poems of the greenness of the grass, of the great desire to till the soil and make it fruitful, and of the trees. He marvels at their struggle for existence, how they strike roots in the crevices of rocks, and how they withstand the heat of the summer and the might of the storms. His poetry whispers of the sweetness of the apple and the oil of the olive; the green grass covering the field delights his eyes. In *Nahar Yarok* he says of the grass, "It embraces my feet, kisses my eyes, and the brightness of its color and its spring freshness pour into my heart like a waterfall on the green."

His joy in tilling the soil and watching the growth of the plants is limitless. He exclaims enthusiastically, "We rush from sowing to sowing; to sow, to sow is the one desire which finds no rest in our hearts."

In several short poems, he describes the happy child planting a shoot in the ground, pouring water on it, and praying for its growth. Joy fills the poet's heart, for he already sees in vision the full-grown tree and hears the murmur of its leaves. In another poem, we hear the sounds of the plows as they cut the first furrows, the joyful voices of the children who flit around in the field, and the song of the youths who, exulting join hands and dance.

In all these poems, there is heard an overtone of sorrow emanating from the struggle in defense of that land from the fear of war, and from the difficulties of existence during such times. But hope does not forsake the poet. He says, "We only laugh at the voice of a raven foreboding war, for the iron of the plow will sing with the joy of youth and take hold of the field. Seven times will the serpent—the enemy—strike at the land. But through our love, it will bloom again, though stormed daily."

However, though Gilead strives hard to stifle sorrow, it breaks forth at times. In the *Kinah* (An Elegy), he says, "Verily, the morning spreads gold, but in its midst there are heard the voices of sorrow. The soul which dreams and strives is bowed down by dust and blood. Blood is spilled in the mountains, and my heart feels the dead friend's heart."

A number of his songs devoted to the poet's daughter are especially enchanting. He is enraptured by the breaking light of the morning, by the beauty of the red flowers, but even more by a voice ringing in his ears his daughter's voice, which prophesies the sunrise. Looking into the eyes of his daughter, he sees in them, when she smiles at him, a golden spark, awakening in him delight which is like the joy of seeing a field of ripe grain.

Gilead's song is the song of a man rooted in the land of Israel, enjoying its new life, and ready to bear all suffering for its defense and safety.

## ii. LEAH GOLDBERG

The poetess Leah Goldberg, like Shalev, reveals in one of her poems, *Priḥat Tamuz* (Flowering in the Month of Tamuz), the essential character of poetic work. Her plaint is that the new trend in poetry tends to philosophize and possesses an intellectual hardness. She longs for the freshness of spring and the abundance of feeling which prevailed in the earlier poetry. Her own works are pervaded by a spirit of freshness and lightness.

Her nature poems, though short, convey a depth of feeling and love of beauty. Standing on the shores of Elat and impressed by the sunset which reddens the mountains, and by the stillness of the desert, she is so overwhelmed that she calls out, "Men, do not move, but stand still and drink in the beauty which nature pours out before you" (*Al Hof Elat*). Nothing in nature seems insignificant to her. Passing an ancient tree, strong and mighty, that bends its branches low unto the flowing stream beneath, she asks "Why did the solid and deeply rooted tree bend to the flowing passing water?" And the answer: "Not without pain, labor, and struggle did the tree grow; many were the storms it battled; time and again did the wind beat its branches. Only the small flowing stream knew of the tree's pain of growth and supplied it with water from which it drew life and power to raise its trunk higher and higher, hence it bows its branches to the water."

And in the same perceptive spirit which penetrates the inside of things and events, she sings of life and its vicissitudes and of the ways of life that man follows at different times. "Beautiful is the way," says the boy; "hard is the path of struggle," exclaims the youth; "long is the way," says the man. The tired old man says little, but sits down by the way to rest. To him the poetess calls, "Remember the

beauty, the rigors of the way. In the past, plodding on that journey, days were not counted, they seemed all alike and each brought nothing new. But now when the end of the way may be near, every day is counted, every day brings something new under the sun." This message echoes in the heart of all of us.

She, herself, does not want to wait for the end of the way to find new experiences, but prefers to enjoy every day and every hour of life. She therefore offers this prayer: "Teach me, O God, to enjoy the vision of sprouting leaves, the gleam of ripe fruit, to have the freedom and ability to see, to feel, to know, to hope, and even to slumber at times. Teach me to bless and sing when time renews itself, morning and evening, that every day shall not be like yesterday, and the day before it, and life shall not become trite and habitual."

In spite of her striving for newness in life, memories play an important role in her songs of nature and life. She sings of the glow with which memory enhances the past. "We remember the youth of the stalk of grain when its head was high and the body straight, but in its ripeness the head is bent under the weight of the grain. We remember the trees in spring glistening with white flowers and dripping sweet sap, but at the end of summer, its branches are bent under the heavy burden of fruit, and similarly we are gladdened in later life when we remember the joys and gladness of the past.

The same feeling is evident in her love poems. Memory is their main theme. It is the remembered first love which sheds rays of light on dark moments in later life. Usually her love songs are not of the present, but of the past, of days gone by. However, the canvas is wide and beautiful, for it includes not only the love scenes, but also the natural setting in which they occur. The bloom of the blossoms, the song of the birds, the blue of the sky, all share in the memories and cast their glow and impart pleasure, though tinged with pangs of sorrow.

Thus Leah Goldberg's poems impart freshness and warmth to our view of the world and life.

### iii. JOSEPH LICHTENBAUM

Joseph Lichtenbaum may be described as an individualistic poet, for he expresses only the moods of his own soul. The title of the collection of his poems, *be-zel ha-Sha'oth* (In the Shadow of the Hours), reflects somewhat the character of many of his songs, for in them there is much shadow. The darkness and stillness of the night are

deeply felt in his poetry. They awake in him sorrowful thoughts, expressed in short lyrical poems. The motif is primarily the same, but the expression varies, and often arouses an echo in our hearts, for everyone shares in life's sorrows.

However, he also reveals other motifs. At times he beautifully depicts moments of stillness in nature, when the waters in the sea undulate in silence, when the air is undisturbed by the wind, and the world shines in a glow of light. Such moments still the storm in his heart.

In similar moods, he casts off his sorrow entirely and sings with great skill and charm of the lesson nature teaches him. Observing the flowers as they bloom, the mole in its burrowing, the humming bees in flight, and listening to the murmur of the brook, he considers himself akin to all these children of nature, and calm and repose enter his heart. Again, he draws a lesson from the seed of the tree which rests in darkness, yet out of this seed there sprout forth branches, leaves, and fruit. Therefore, he must not fear the darkness which may cast a shadow on his life, for the tree of his own life will also bear fruit and his future days will be bright with joy.

This joy reaches great heights in *Tévé*l (The World), wherein the world appears to him enveloped in light. When his soul absorbs that light, his longing for complete communion with the world takes hold of him until he and the world become one. Several of these poems are permeated with a religious spirit. In one, he hears in the stillness of nature its whisper to God, and in another he feels as if threads connect his soul with the hem of the coat of glory in which God is wrapped (Nirvana).

#### 8. NATHAN ALTERMAN AND REUBEN ABINOAM

One of the most prolific poets in Israel is Nathan Alterman. For an entire decade his work appeared in the column *ha-Tur ha-Shebi* (The Seventh Column), published daily in the *ha-Aretz*. His poems reflect Jewish life and its vicissitudes, primarily in Israel, but, to a degree, that of the Diaspora as well.

The two volumes containing a collection of these poems present a record of current Jewish life during the last ten years, events great and small are noted and evaluated in humorous, satirical, or even tragic poetry revealing his penetrating insight.

The days of terror which overtook the Jews of Europe permeate his early songs. In one, a child asks his mother, after their release from their hiding place in one of the cities under Nazi rule, "Mother,

can I cry now?" a brief question revealing the depth of their tragedy. The later poems dealing with the struggle during the mid-forties against the English ban on immigration and the Arab attacks are skillful, humorous, and satirical. One poem presents an imaginary dialogue between two children born on the day the parents landed secretly in Israel. Their discussion of the situation ends with the words, "The English, I feel will not always hover about the shores of the land, but children's cradles will always be there in large numbers."

Still later poems, written in the fifties, dwell upon Jewish life in Israel and its echoes in the Diaspora. Nothing escapes the poet's glance. He sings with glee on the day when the Jewish population in Israel reaches a million. His column on the passing of compulsory education laws is exuberant, and he is enraptured by the melody of footsteps as an army of children march to school, a melody that moves the heart of the nation.

His satire is biting, but is frequently leavened by good-natured humor. Commenting upon a statement of American Zionists that America will become a cultural center second only to that of Israel, he says in a poem entitled *New Pumbedita*, "Surely, there are scholars in Israel, in Jerusalem, Tiberias, Safed, and in other cities, but other learned men will teach in Cincinnati and Brooklyn and will compose a new Talmud. It was thus in Babylonia. Why can it not happen again? The trouble," he says, "is that all these prophecies have only one purpose, to explain why American Zionists should not settle in Israel."

With all the poet's love for the State of Israel and its new life, he satirizes certain trends in that life, such as the rise of a bureaucratic system in the administration of the government or the excessive enthusiasm for celebrations. In the poem entitled *The Strength of Methuselah*, he bewails the shortness of our span of life. Surely, says he, Methuselah in his long life, could afford to wait sixty or seventy years in the anterooms of offices, but we poor mortals have neither the strength nor the time for long waiting. It seems, he concludes, that the office administration is not adjusted to the brief span of our lives. In another column, he satirizes the celebration of a festival in honor of King David whose rule began three thousand years ago. He advises the committee to celebrate the jubilee of Job instead of that of David; he who suffers much, says Alterman, will not mind suffering once more, but David must not suffer.

These are only a few examples of his penetrating commentary on

Jewish life. The quality of his poetry is enhanced by his masterly style and the skill with which he integrates foreign words and phrases to complete his humor and satire with their notes of tragedy.

## ii. REUBEN ABINOAM

Reuben Abinoam made his first strides in poetry while still a youth in New York, but his muse gathered strength and his poetic skill ripened with his arrival in Palestine in the mid 1920's. There are several collections of his poems, but he is at his best in his *Idylls*. The *Idylls* are divided into three parts. The first, *Hagigoth* (Celebrations) contains *Shabbat*, *Lel Hadlakah* (The Night of Lag B'Omer), and *Ereb Moed* (The Eve of the Holy Day). These picture moments of life in the city of Tel-Aviv in the early 1930's when the spirit of the Sabbath and the Holidays reigns.

He draws his idyllic picture on a wide canvas. The preparations for receiving the Sabbath are depicted in great detail. This is followed by the picture of the entry of the Sabbath accompanied by light and song, the light of the candles and the song of children returning from prayer and the melody of the Kiddush.

Then follow scenes of the Sabbath day, of its solemnity disturbed only by the dances of the children in the streets, of the spirit of joy and restfulness as reflected in the faces of men and women going to the seashore, and finally of the departure of the Shekinah of the Sabbath and the awakening of the city to the noisy week-day life.

The second *Idyll* portrays the celebration of Lag B'Omer which Oriental Jews celebrate by lighting bonfires to commemorate the day of the death of Simon ben Yohai, the author of the Zohar. The labor of the children gathering wood for the fires, the lighting of the fires, and the dances around them are described with detail and charm. The third *Idyll* recreates a business scene on the day before Succot when the buying and selling of the Ethrog and the Lulav reaches a height. It is pictured in all its phases, the examination of the Ethrogim by the buyers, their bargaining, and the hurry of both buyers and sellers to complete the transactions.

The second group consists of idyllic scenes on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel-Aviv where mothers come to walk their babies, the children to play, and the old people to chat, rest, and reminisce. The discussions between them are beautifully narrated. Other *Idylls* portray a day in Sharon, the arrival of a boat of tourists and settlers and their first impressions of the land.

Also noteworthy are the poems with which Abinoam prefaces the book dedicated to the memory of his son Noam, who fell in the War of Liberation in 1948. They are filled with deep emotion and tragic beauty.

In the first poem he thanks God for the joy and pleasure of the parents in possessing and raising their son until his twenty-first year. The stanzas, permeated with parental love, portray the light in the eyes of the son, the purity of his glance, and the goodness of his character. The second poem again expresses thanks to God for the son's heroic death in defense of Israel and his people, a death which is a gift worthy of saints. He also attaches symbolic meaning to the effusive rain on the day of mourning—the weeping of God over the losses in the army of Israel.

In the third poem, Abinoam writes of the stages in his son's life within the family—childhood, boyhood, and youth. At the end of the poem, he seems to hear the voice of the son crying, "I did not die, I did not die." And the father concludes, "He lives in the love his parents bear him and in the echo of his death which will reverberate in the history of Israel." These poems move the heart to its depths.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SHORT STORY AND THE NOVEL

#### 9. AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

That the production of short stories and novels in Palestine or Israel is large and exceeds that of poetry goes without saying, for their purpose is to portray life in all its phases. The themes are therefore more numerous for, while that life in Israel, both before and after the birth of the State, occupies an important role in prose, phases of Jewish life in the Diaspora during the time of the catastrophe and after it also receive literary attention. In addition, the heritage of our people permeates the historical novels and short stories.

Therefore, in presenting a survey of the belletristic prose which must be limited in its extent, special attention must be paid to the choice of the selections. It seems to me that it is proper to present them according to the phases of life reflected in them.

#### 10. PORTRAYALS OF JEWISH LIFE IN THE DIASPORA

##### i. NAOMI FRANKEL

*Saul and Johanna*, by Naomi Frankel, reflects Jewish life in Germany in the 1930's. It is refreshing because of the newness of its content and is distinguished by the skillful depiction of the environment and the deeply penetrating glance into the soul of the characters participating in the development of the plot. In spite of the title, Saul and Johanna are neither the heroes nor the villains of the story, though they play an important role. The novel aims to portray Jewish life in Germany in the year 1930, when the shadow of Hitlerism had already fallen upon the land, but was not yet completely dominant. It is the reflection of that shadow on the life of a wealthy Jewish family, almost completely assimilated, and the reaction of the various members of the family to the possible dire changes in the near

future, which is the theme of the story. The family, whose name is Levi, consists of the grandfather, his son Arthur and Arthur's seven children. The older children, Heinz and Edith, and a younger daughter Johanna, are the leading characters in this drama.

The family owns a large iron foundry established by the elder Levi, who turned the management over to Arthur when he retired to his estate in East Prussia. During Arthur's illness, Heinz took charge. The relation of the members of the family to Judaism consists primarily in their consciousness of being Jews, a consciousness which has been rudely intensified by their German neighbors. Otherwise their life differs little from that of the Gentiles.

Yet, involuntarily, contact was established between the house of Arthur Levi and the Jewish world, and an echo of the new movement in Jewry is heard within it, even that of Zionism. The mediator is Dr. Lasker, who came to Berlin from Poland twenty years before and, with the help of Arthur Levi, studied law and ultimately became not only the family lawyer but its beloved and dearest friend. Lasker was an ardent Zionist, active in the Jewish community, yet he did not attempt to propagate his views in Levis' home. He is, however, instrumental in bringing a change into the life of one of the younger members. When his young nephew, Saul Goldstein, the son of his sister Rosalie, was in need of a holiday, Lasker decided to bring him into the Levi family to spend his vacation with the younger children at their grandfather's estate in East Prussia.

Saul's ability to read the strange Hebrew language and his persistence in observing the dietary laws charms little Johanna, and the two youngsters become fast friends. One day she surprises her father by asking him to engage a Hebrew teacher for her. To her father's wonder at the reason for the request, she replies, "Am I not a Jewish child? Why then do we not live like Jews, as Saul's parents do? Why do I attend the Christian religious courses? Saul says that it is a great sin and that I will suffer for that in hell." Her father grants her request but insists upon her attendance at the religious courses in school, saying, "Remember that you are a little German citizen." Arthur is then stirred by the problem of Judaism and wonders at the viewpoint of his own father, for whom happiness consists in attaining industrial aggrandizement.

This, however, is not the only change that takes place in the life of the family. The echo of increased anti-Semitism begins to be heard in the house, and the first to be aware of it is Heinz, who has taken

charge of the factory. A contract with the city gas works and Levi's foundry has been agreed upon, but the signatures have been delayed for weeks.

He invites a Christian friend, Emil Rofka, a police officer, to the house to seek his advice. The visit produces a dual result. First, Emil meets Edith and she falls in love with him and accompanies him on a prolonged tour. The father is worried, and even Heinz is perturbed. Second, Emil advises Heinz to take in a Gentile as a partner and change the name of the firm. Heinz then begins to feel the pulse of the time, and starts to look for a Gentile partner. However, when he brings this proposition to his father, Arthur Levi opposes it and declares firmly that as long as he lives this will not happen. Heinz stresses the dangerous situation, but the father says, "Anti-semitism is not an innovation, and it will ultimately disappear with the improvement of the economic situation."

But Heinz is not pacified; his fears grow greater, and he regrets the introduction of Emil to Edith. She finally comes home, and the relation between brother and sister becomes cool, bordering on animosity. The father is also perturbed but does not rebuke her. Emil, on his first visit to the house, senses the family's attitude towards him and never comes again. Edith, however continues to love him and agrees to marry him in church.

While Edith turns away from Judaism, Johanna, under the influence of Saul, becomes more and more versed in Jewish life. She refuses to eat meat and zealously guards her utensils. She studies Hebrew and is persuaded by Saul to join the Zionist youth group. She asks Heinz to take her to a Hanukah celebration.

The general situation grows worse. Heinz becomes desperate and proposes to call a family council to decide about the Gentile partnership. The grandfather opposes the proposition. Heinz argues and reminds him of the hard times, but the old man, like his son, believes that things will change. Meanwhile a general strike of the metal-workers breaks out and the foundry is closed. The strike causes street demonstrations, and the Levis are somewhat subdued and are even willing to accept Heinz's proposition. The strike is settled and the situation in the foundry improves. Yet, Heinz remains pessimistic. The older people are still hopeful, and a great celebration is planned for Christmas Eve, in which all except little Johanna participate.

Lasker also occupies an important part in the story. His fine character, love of his people, his dream of settling in Palestine, and the

unhappy ending of his love affair with Bella, the secretary of the Zionist Youth Organization, are masterfully portrayed. When Bella informs him that she is pregnant, Lasker proposes marriage, but she demands that they leave immediately for Palestine. He delays the departure for a long time and she eventually leaves him.

The value of the novel is heightened by extensive descriptions of street scenes and the portrayals of meetings and gatherings in which the clash of parties and the turbulent spirit of the times are reflected.

## ii. ISAAC SHINHAR

During his short life (1905-1957), Isaac Shinhar (originally Shoenberg) succeeded in making an important contribution to the belles-lettres of Israel. He distinguished himself as a short-story writer and as a translator. His stories deal with Jewish life in Russia during the days of terror, with some aspects of life in Israel, and Jewish life in South America.

His stories of the days of terror reveal the tragedy in all its gruesomeness, the suffering, the tortures, and the moral deterioration of those who continue to drag out their miserable existence among the ruins. In a story entitled *Basar we-Dam* (Flesh and Blood), we are introduced to a Jewish underworld group and their leaders, who try to obtain something good for themselves in a world of lawlessness. When the pogrom breaks out in the town, they fight the attackers, but loot Jewish homes and stores for their own gain, and when a detachment of revolutionaries enters the town they are shot along with the pogromists.

In another story, *Halleluyah*, the after effects of a massacre in a Jewish community are depicted, resulting not only in despair, but in doubt of a divine providence. Men and women openly question the presence of a God in the world. There is only one young man, Yolek, who is embittered from his very youth because of his deformed body, yet does not lose faith in God. He is moved by desire for revenge, and when he sees a house whose Jewish owners were killed, now occupied by Gentiles, he sets fire to it, and when the flames rise, he shouts gleefully, "Halleluyah."

In *Nishmata shel Esther Maadani* (The Soul of Esther Maadani), Shinhar humorously reveals to us the secret of Esther's soul. She is a Tamanite girl who has learned the ways of the more sophisticated European women in the pursuit of men. She declares to Ezra, a young man who courts her, that she possesses a soul and does not want to

hear his frivolous amorous talk. Yet she frequently goes out with him to dances and movies, although she knows that another young man, Ephraim, is a worthy suitor. On the occasion of a visit to Ezra's house he attempts to attack her, and she is saved by the police who arrived to arrest him for smuggling. Her delicate soul is not affected by the experience. Asked by her sister whether she will marry Ezra if he proposes to her after his release from prison, Esther answers, "Ephraim waits for me, Ezra waits for release; I also will wait."

In general, Shinhar's stories are distinguished by thorough analysis of the characters of his stories probing their conduct, thought and feeling. He hardly misses a tremor of the soul or a shade of thought.

The best work of Shinhar is his last book, *be Shibah Derakim* (In Seven Ways), written after his return from a trip to South America where he acted as a representative of the Zionist Organization. While it is intended as a descriptive travelogue, in reality it is much more, and can best be characterized as a belletristic encyclopedia lacking only alphabetical arrangement.

It contains beautiful descriptions of various natural scenes and of Jewish life in South America, Indian legends about the creation of the world and early Indian history, and accounts of revolutions in the various South American countries. In addition, the author recounts visits to Paris, Belgium, and the Scandinavian countries, drawing sketches of the Bohemian life of Jewish students and Israeli artists in Paris. All these are presented artistically with a recurrent poetic note.

Of special interest are his portrayals of Jewish life in South America, particularly of the life of Jews scattered over the wide areas where one or two Jewish families live in a town or city, in a totally strange environment, and who consequently long for a touch of Jewishness.

Some of the incidents recorded by the author deserve mention. Visiting a small Jewish community consisting of ten families, Shinhar was met by one of its leaders, who invited him to his home, but warned him that he is married to an Indian woman. He introduces Shinhar to his wife and children, the oldest of whom is a boy of sixteen with marked Indian features. When the guest is alone in the room, the boy comes to beg him to influence his father to send him to Israel, for says he, he fears that if he remains at home he will sink to the level of the environment. The spark of Jewishness is not entirely extinguished in this family.

In another town, the author finds only one Jewish resident. He

approaches him for a contribution, but the Jew claims that he cannot afford to give anything. "Besides," he adds, "I did my share for Israel. The house in which I live belonged to an Arab, and I, the Jew, redeemed it from him," he explains, smiling broadly and proud of his witty argument. All this time his wife, a Negro, stands in silence, wondering at the guest and his demand.

On his travels he passes a town where there is one Jewish store owned by two partners, one a bachelor and the other with a wife and two children. Shinhar pays the partners a visit and is received very courteously. However, when the conversation turns to the matter of a contribution for Israel, the partners plead hard times, and consequently, they cannot contribute as much as last year. After much bickering a sum is agreed upon and paid. The partners then invite the guest to their home for a drink. On entering the house, the guest is surprised at the rich furnishings, and on parting he says to the owners, "Had I seen the house before, I would have insisted on a much larger contribution." "Yes," answered the bachelor, "I guessed as much, and for that reason, I did not invite you before," and he broke out in laughter, rejoicing at his cleverness.

Thus, the author unfolds before us a world-wide panorama of Jewish life and all humanity. In addition, his narrative is tinged with beauty and penetration into the human soul.

### iii. S. D. BUNIN

Another work which recounts the effects of the holocaust that overtook the Jews in Eastern Europe, is the collection of moving stories, *ha-Bayit Mispar 29* (The House No. 29), by S. D. Bunin. In these stories, the author, who spent several years in the Auschwitz concentration camp where he lost his nine year old son, presents a tragic gallery of human suffering and torture inflicted by the Nazis and of terrifying memories of events that took place in the ghettos of Poland and in concentration camps, during the days immediately following liberation.

The artistic sensibilities of the author restrain his cry of pain in recording what he saw, and lends a feeling of objectivity to his work. Whatever the subject whether of an eight year old girl who enters the Gentile section of the city and supports herself by begging until Polish children stone her when they discover that she is Jewish, or the author's arrival at Auschwitz where he is separated from his wife and child, the portrayal is done with infinite skill. He is especially

effective in the short stories in which the depths of the tragedy are drawn in a few lines. In a story of only two pages, he presents a picture of the Warsaw ghetto, of a family sitting in the street, a mother and three children. On the wall behind them hangs a picture of the family taken in former days. Some days later, he passes by again and sees one of the children dead, covered with a newspaper, yet the others continue to beg. In time, he sees another child lying dead, covered with a newspaper, but the mother and the one remaining child are still begging. Finally, when he goes by two weeks later, he sees no one—only the picture on the wall remains.

In the story, *ha-Bayit Mispār* 29, the name the book bears, Bunin tells of those who were saved and returned to their old homes, bearing in their souls the memories of the tortures of their beloved. They try to rebuild their lives. A man and woman, each of whom has lost a mate, are married and have seemingly regained happiness, but the memory of the husband's former wife embitters their lives. When he is seen by his present wife, fondling the picture of the former, which he has recovered, jealousy enters the woman's heart and happiness is gone. Such sketches are monuments to the millions lost in the great conflagration of hatred.

## 11. ECHO OF THE DIASPORA LIFE IN ISRAEL

### i. JACOB HAR EBEN

The echo of Jewish life in the Diaspora of the near past, before the establishment of the State of Israel, reverberates in the short stories of Jacob Har Eben, collected in a volume entitled *Ḥamishi be-Shebuah* (The Fifth Day of the Week). The stories deal with many themes. Some describe the struggle of Jewish students who wander from one country to another in an attempt to complete their medical studies. They tell of the various devices the students employ, the strange and temporary occupations they engage in, in order to achieve their aim. The author depicts the busy life of the Jewish merchants on market day in a small town in Russia, and the misfortune that befell Hayyim Kuper, an innkeeper and liquor dealer who is surprised by the excise officer in the midst of his profitable transactions and arrested for selling liquor without license.

The moving stories of the aged settlers in Israel who find it difficult to adjust to new conditions, tell of their former ways of life and the important roles they once played. One, Kalman Hilzer, cannot accustom himself to his electric light. Whenever it is turned on, he

dreams of the large kerosene lamp in his former home. Baruch Saltzberg who lives in his daughter's house, wanders around in loneliness, ever thinking of his past activities and responsibilities. He had been the *Shtadlan* of his community, that is the go-between for the Jews and the officers of the administration, and was instrumental in saving many a Jew from its snare. The value of all these sketches lies in the artistic portrayals of the former life which arise in the minds of these aged men, and which offer a glimpse of Jewish life in the provincial Russian towns of Bessarabia.

An interesting story is one called *Boaz of Dupra* (a town in Algeria). Thither comes the author as a representative of the Zionist organization to arrange the election of delegates to a conference. He meets the chairman of the local society in his butcher shop. The chairman receives the representative in a friendly manner, but at the same time tries to hurry him out of town. He invites him to his home and tells the author that the butcher shop is only a sideline with him. He owns much property, farms, vineyards, and several villas. He is a veritable Boaz, reminiscent of the Book of Ruth. This Boaz takes him through all his holdings and asks the Zionist representative, "Do you think that Palestine can really be of much interest to a man like myself?"

Before parting, the author says to him, "You asked me a question which I did not answer. I shall answer one which you did not ask. 'Will your many properties belong to your son as well as to you?' To this, I say, 'perhaps to you, but not to your son,'" a prophecy which came true shortly thereafter, and which reflects the attitude of leading Zionist workers in the lands of the Diaspora.

## ii. ISRAEL ZARCHI

Israel Zarchi (1910-1947) was able to produce a number of short stories during his short life, some of which deal with the same theme. However, the characters are not East European Jews, but German-Jewish settlers, who belonged to the higher social stratum in their native land. *Molon Orchim* (A Pension) is the most typical and the most tragic of the stories. The *pension* is maintained by Mrs. Nathan, the wife of a former banker, who left Germany before the Nazi storm broke in full force. She resorted to this means of support when the money they had brought from Germany was exhausted. The guests at the *pension* belong to the same social class and share the same economic status. The most distinguished of them are Judge Simon and his wife. The Judge frequently mentions a short letter which he had



received one day in his court, containing his discharge from office. In addition, there are Mr. Schultz and his blond German wife, who shares her husband's fate, and Dr. Herman. The Jewishness of all of the guests is quite superficial, consisting merely in their acknowledgment of their Judaic background. The Nathans have even baptized their son Michael, in order to free him from the burden of his heritage. In Israel, however, he becomes a member of the Kibbutz.

For a time, the owners and their guests, succeed in retaining the atmosphere of the old home in their new life. The dining room is furnished with the old furniture, and the meals are served in the old way with proper decorum. Soon, however, things begin to change. Money gradually diminishes and the heads of families must seek work. The Schultz's open a small drug store. Dr. Herman abandons medicine and, at first, works on an invention; but finally, he too must look for a job. As the days pass, the lure of the land begins to take hold, and with the exception of Judge Simon, they speak of it in praise. The judge insists that no one can change his ways, impressed on him by his native land where he spent the greater part of his life.

The situation at the *pension* gets worse. With the exception of the Schultz's who move to their own apartment, others look for cheaper and poorer quarters. Finally, when the Second World War breaks out and all relations with their former home are interrupted, tragedies begin to happen. The Judge and his wife, their dreams of returning dispelled, their monthly income from Germany at an end, threatened by poverty, commit suicide. Herman, who visits the port daily, expecting the arrival of his family, is overcome by despair. Mrs. Nathan, to save herself from utter poverty, begins to rent out rooms without board to whoever applies and spends hours in the empty elegant dining room dreaming of the glorious past. Only the Schultz's are saved from despair and grief. They adapt themselves to conditions, as does Mr. Nathan, who, though confused and wondering at his baptized son's enjoyment of his work in the Kibbutz, finds solace in the knowledge that Michael is striking roots in the new life. The struggles of these people, their failures, their despair, and the hope sprouting in the hearts of many are communicated impressively.

## 12. KIBBUTZ STORIES

### i. YIGAL MOSENSOHN

Yigal Mosensohn is a leading representative of the young fiction writers in Israel, many of whom are sabras. His short stories, as his

novel, *The Way of a Man*, written before the birth of the State, reflect the life of the Kibbutz and the struggle of the young sabra generation to transform Palestine into a Jewish Homeland.

Almost all the stories depict the life of the Kibbutz. There is much shadow in this life during the early years of the Kibbutz, especially in the family; and there are too many triangle episodes. Huddled in the small quarters of the Kibbutz, their lives narrowed down to toil, common meals, and meetings, sexual attraction affords the only relief from drabness, and hence the recurrent erotic episodes.

However, there is also much that is bright in that life as Mosensohn presents it. He describes the exceptional readiness of the young men to undergo all dangers for the sake of the great ideal, that of changing Palestine into the land of Israel. They are ready to sacrifice their lives, often at the cost of the happiness of their beloved ones, their wives and children, on the altar of that ideal.

Several stories in Mosensohn's collection reflect this kind of devotion. In one of these stories, he tells of the soul-gripping tragedy in the life of the Hanan, a member of a Kibbutz. His wife Sonia has become deranged on learning that her mother, who had not escaped from the railroad car that was taking all of them to the concentration camp, had been burned in the crematory. Hanan takes care of Sonia for a time, guarding her from injury and showing her great love and attention; yet when the call comes to join the Jewish legion sent by the British to Africa to fight the Germans, he obeys. His only regret upon leaving is that he has been assigned to noncombatant work. He says, "How happy would I be if I could actually kill some Germans and avenge my Sonia, who is now like an animal shut in between four walls, my Sonia whose soul, like her mother's body, is now turned to ashes."

In *Corporal Sonnenberg*, the tragic action of the hero reflects not only his readiness to love his fellow man, as an equal, but even more than himself; he saves the lives of others by willingly sacrificing his own. A bomb is found in a room in the Kibbutz and Isaac Aloni seizes it, carrying it with trembling hands. Sonnenberg, who is more experienced in such matters, takes it from him and prepares to throw it through the window into the yard. But, upon looking out, he sees young and happy children playing there. To save them, he throws himself on the bomb and is torn to pieces. The writer intensifies this tragedy by going on to depict the arrival of Sonnenberg's aged and weakened mother. She senses the tragedy and continually asks for her

son. The children tell her that he has been "electrified," but she cannot comprehend the meaning of the words and falls asleep in utter exhaustion. Nobody wakes her; the mother sleeps while her only son is buried.

The very short story, *Kvasim* (Sheep), revolves about the conflict within the soul of a member of the Kibbutz, Abraham Levi, who, to satisfy his great desire for artistic expression, commits a theft. Levi, who had painted in his pre-Kibbutz days, longs to pick up a brush once more. But as a member of the Kibbutz, which allows little money for personal expenditures, he is unable to obtain the necessary paints and canvas legally. He steals some sheep from the Kibbutz and sells them. The administration discovers his theft and calls a meeting to decide his punishment. Asked to defend his action, Levi leaves the room. He returns in a few minutes with his paintings, and throwing them down, shouts, "This is my bread, my bread. You see I am no thief," and breaks out in sobs. There is only one member of the Kibbutz, the widow Greta, who sympathizes with him. Mosensohn, through the mouth of Greta, inserts a critical note which evaluates the materialistic aspect of Kibbutz life. She comforts Levi by saying, "Those that long for art have no place in its midst." "Maybe," she adds, "there will be more understanding of it in the future." She then advises him to leave, but he decides to face his accusers.

In *Sergeant Green*, Mosensohn creates a character whose soul is aglow with spiritual and moral beauty and who strives to impress upon his rather rough companions an appreciation of the value of human feelings. Green, who is in charge of a military station in a Kibbutz during the war of the middle forties, continually tries to temper the desire for revenge which consumes the group he commands. When an old Arab is brought to the camp by several members, he saves him from death at their hands. The English are preparing an attack against the station and Simon, the commander of the forces in the region, orders the group to withdraw with the exception of Green who is to remain and subdue the attackers. He also orders Green to kill the Arab, but the sergeant refuses. Green suspects that he was chosen to remain because Miriam, Simon's wife, had loved Green before her marriage. Yet he agrees to remain and sends away all the others, ready to die if necessary. He reflects bitterly upon his companions and says, "I begged them continually to reveal a spark of humanity in their conduct, but in vain; perhaps they do not possess it at all." One day, before the others have left, he finds the Arab

dead, a bullet in his body. He accuses himself of not endeavoring to influence his companions to change their conduct, and considers himself the Arab's murderer. They all leave, but Miriam suddenly appears to beg Green to disobey Simon's order. He refuses, and Miriam remains with him. The English come, but Green succeeds in justifying himself before them, and they leave. As he rejoices at his survival, he is struck by a bullet fired by the English. Miriam rushes to his side and hears him murmur, not bemoaning his own death, but the death of the old Arab, for which he considers himself responsible. This story skillfully delineates the best qualities of humanity.

The title of Mosensohn's novel, *Derek Geber* (The Way of a Man), borrowed from a verse in Proverbs (30:19), which reads, "The way of a man with a maid," reveals, whether intended or not, the general trend of the plot which analyzes the role of the "triangle" in the lives of men and women and its effect upon those caught in its meshes. Reuben Bloch, a member of the Kibbutz, a married man and the father of children, is the villain. Endowed with all the finest qualities of masculinity—handsome, vivacious, a good dancer—he becomes the center of attraction for the women of the Kibbutz. As a result, he has intimate relations with two married women, Raya, the wife of Joseph Alon, and Shoshanah, the wife of Raphael Huber. The latter even tells her husband of her love for Bloch.

However, while the triangle episode seems to be the basis of the story, the author does not linger on the development of the affair itself, but on its effect upon the two women's husbands and the resultant tragedies, the suicide of Alon and the shooting of Bloch by Huber. Huber's action is not altogether intentional, and may even be considered accidental. One night, while Huber and Bloch are on sentry duty, Huber, playing with the Sten gun, discharges two bullets and Bloch is struck. Huber, himself, cannot decide whether it was pure accident, or whether subconscious desire urged him to pull the trigger. The people considered it an accident and merely ask Huber to leave the Kibbutz for a time.

Mosensohn tries to show the effects of the episodes upon the husbands from a psychological point of view, devoting many long passages to their thoughts and feelings, as they observe their wives dancing with Bloch or talking to him. He also records their general attitude of life and happiness, but there is more verbiage in the delineations than real psychology.

The book contains a great many descriptive passages which chron-

icle the life of the Kibbutz, replete with meetings, social gatherings, and tensions with the English. As a whole, there is little unity to the narrative; scenes and episodes are strung together without coherent linking. The author's inclination to inject the erotic is much more evident in the novel than in his stories.

Of special interest are the critical remarks uttered by Alon and Huber about life in the Kibbutz. Alon protests against the neglect of the individual and the disregard for his life and problems. He even urges Nahum Gankin, a member of the Kibbutz, to voice a protest in his writings. Gankin, however, says that he looks only for the light in life and passes over the shadow; yet at times he thinks that Alon may be right. Similarly, Huber passes judgment upon certain aspects of Kibbutz life that often undermine the quiet and peace which should prevail in the family. Comparing Mosensohn the novelist with Mosensohn the short-story writer, we can say that on the whole his skill as a belletrist is more evident in his short stories than in his novel.

## ii. I. S. ZEMACH

Of the numerous short stories which do not actually portray life in the Kibbutz, but shed light on some of its features, several are noteworthy. One of these is by I. S. Zemach, in his collection of short stories, *Shivah Eser Sippurim* (Seventeen Stories). Almost all of his characters are oppressed by loneliness arising from such factors as the difficulty in adjusting to a new environment. In the story to which I refer, the effect of loneliness upon a pair of oxen brought to a Kibbutz from Damascus, where they were raised upon broad and fertile pastureland in the company of well-bred cattle is described. Their owner is proud of the team, which is outstanding in height, strength, and length of horns. The end, however, is tragic. Neither the dry, withered pasture nor the company of the small Arab cattle suit the aristocratic pair, and day after day, their eyes, reflecting deep loneliness and yearning for their old home, scan the horizon. They grow thinner and thinner until one dies and the other has to be slaughtered.

Another story, by Yehudah Yaari, *Ben ha-Keleb ve ha-Rosh* (Between the Dog and the Shepherd), is interesting for its theme as well as for its tragic ending. Absalom, born and bred in a Galilean colony, becomes a shepherd in a Kibbutz. He loves the sheep, loves the shepherd dog that herds the flock at pasture, keeps them from straying during the day and guards them by night from thieves. When Ab-

salom brings in a new flock bought for the Kibbutz, he, his flock, and his dog are received by old and young with great joy; the only one missing at the reception is his wife Judith who is unable to leave the coop of young chickens which are in her care.

Absalom goes to meet Judith at the coop. When the dog sees the chicken coops open, he rushes in and feathers are soon flying. Judith, terrified, begins to cry, and henceforth a coolness comes between husband and wife. For a while they are reconciled, but when, several months later, the dog again breaks into the hatchery and not only feathers fly but the blood of the young chicks is shed, Judith faints. When she regains consciousness she demands that Absalom either drive the dog away or kill him.

Eventually Absalom kills the dog, and at the same time accidentally a number of hatching chickens. The break between the couple seems to be irreconcilable and Absalom feels that his life has become empty by the loss of the dog and the love of his wife. The description of Absalom's attachment to his sheep and his dog, and that of Judith's to her chickens and their newly hatched chicks is superb. Their devotion to the animals is part of a still greater love, a love for the work in the Kibbutz and for the new life which is being established in the land of Israel.

### 13. NOVELS PORTRAYING PHASES OF LIFE IN ISRAEL

#### i. JOSHUA BAR YOSEPH

The exotic life, enveloped by a halo of mysticism and saturated with extreme piety and a yearning for the Messianic redemption which prevailed in the city of Safed for centuries and may still prevail in some of its corners, is recaptured in the work of Joshua Bar Yoseph. His novel, *Iir Kesuma* (Bewitched City), presents an artistic and skillful picture of that life during the second decade of this century when the influence of modernity had hardly penetrated its walls. The plot centers around the complexities in the life of a leading family headed by Eliezer Katz, who is highly respected for his learning, piety, and for his self-acquired medical skill. He is even known among the Arabs as *Hakim Eliezer*.\*

The story begins with the marriage of Eliezer's granddaughter Sarah, daughter of his son Hayyim, to Joseph, the scion of a noble and wealthy Jerusalem family. The marriage between the two im-

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\* *Hakim* means physician in Arabic vernacular.

portant families is celebrated with great pomp. The fame of the Jerusalem guests, the appearance of the groom, as well as the report of his extensive learning, impresses all Safed, and the glory and joy of the Katz family attains great heights. But in the midst of this celebration, an event occurs which mars the festivities and casts a shadow upon the life of the Katz family.

In the midst of the wedding banquet, Ḥayyim, the father of the bride, a man who has delved in mysticism and concentrated upon finding ways and means to hasten the arrival of the Messiah, is suddenly seized with an attack of insanity and begins to break the dishes on the table, shouting and rebuking the guests. He is subdued, but all joy is gone, the guests from Jerusalem part silently and with them the glory of the Katz family. Ḥayyim is confined to a room in the garret for the rest of his life.

As time passes, Eliezer and his family recuperate somewhat from the misfortune, but a whole series of sad events continues to darken their lives. Eliezer's wife is killed at a Lag B'Omer festival at Meron when a building collapses, taking the lives of many. A son of his daughter Pessia, commits suicide because of a disappointing love affair; and when the typhoid plague spreads in Safed at the end of the First World War, Joseph, the young husband of Sarah, dies at the age of twenty-two.

The development of the plot is certainly forced and the numerous tragic events take place haphazardly, yet the value of the novel is not impaired. Its worth and charm consist in the broad background upon which the plot, events, and characterizations are drawn. In this novel, the hum of life in Safed is heard in its many voices, and the multifaceted character of its inhabitants are revealed. We observe the naïveté of the people, their belief in God and their trust in His goodness despite poverty and suffering, and their devotion to learning and to charity. Such traits are especially projected during the time of the First World War when poverty was dominant in Safed, Joseph is forced by hunger threatening his small family to turn to candlemaking, yet he limits his occupation to two days a week in order to be able to devote the other days to the study of the Torah. Poor though he is, when he meets an old beggar woman he takes the few coins intended for the baby's milk, gives them to her, and comes home empty-handed.

The author sketches characters such as Salman Turk the money-lender, who reconciles his greed with deep piety; Reuben the hunch-

back, by vocation a goldsmith, but by avocation a physicist who tries to construct a perpetual motion machine and keeps on trying in spite of all disappointments.

To this kaleidoscopic panorama must be added the charm of description which abounds in the novel and enhances its value.

ii. AARON MEGED

Aaron Meged, a prolific writer of the younger group, deals in his novel, *Hedwah we-Ani* (Hedwah and I), with themes frequently employed by Israeli writers, the rise of bureaucracy in the newly-born State and the struggle between the two forms of life, that of the Kibbutz, in which the individual is merely a link in the group, and that of the city with its hustle and bustle, in which everyone fights for himself. However, the treatment of the themes differs greatly from those of other writers, for Meged not only injects a note of satire in his portrayals, but his pictures of life are fully dimensioned and all encompassing. This story narrates the trials of a young couple, Shlome and Hedwah, who leave the Kibbutz where they have been members for a number of years, and go to Tel-Aviv to adopt a new way of life. Shlome, who is the narrator, leaves the Kibbutz unwillingly, drawn away by his wife.

At first there is great joy in the home of her parents at the children's return to Tel-Aviv and parties are given in their honor; but as the days pass, the search of employment begins. Shlome, who has no special profession or trade, but is accustomed to hard work, is even ready to drive trucks. However, his wife and father-in-law object to this kind of labor and persuade him to enter government service. Shlome satirically relates his experiences at the doors of the offices, the time waiting in anterooms, and the cool reception by the officials. Finally, through the efforts of a friend of his father-in-law, the head of a public relations department, he is given a minor position as a filing clerk. He is not satisfied, but accepts the offer. While filing letters, Shlome notices that a number of them have never been answered; he calls this to the attention of the head of the department and is praised for his observation. However, though employed, he finds it difficult to adjust to the new life. He still longs for the Kibbutz and insists on wearing his Kibbutz cap in spite of his wife's protests and the oblique glances of the clerks and friends.

Notwithstanding Shlome's poor adjustment, a series of events which take place because of Hedwah's friendship with the officials'



wives leads to his promotion in the service. He is especially favored by the director, Ḥaninah, who appoints him head of the press division. Reporters come to interview him, and the interviews are successful. Shlome is quoted in the papers, and, as a result, he becomes a man of importance and receives an increase in salary. Hedwah begins to adjust herself to this comfortable life. She rents an apartment, buys furniture, and continually tries to imitate her friends whose husbands, officials in the government or in business, are on a higher economic level.

Shlome's luck is short-lived. One day, Ḥaninah, the head of the department, after many verbal digressions, finally tells him that though his services are highly satisfactory, for reasons of economy his position must be discontinued. Before he has a chance to tell Hedwah about his dismissal, she tells him of her father's plan to get him a partnership in business, and begins to outline their future, her participation in the business, the new apartment they will move into, and the fine articles of furniture she will buy. Noticing that he does not share her joy, she rebukes him and throws his old Kibbutz cap out of the window. Shlome angrily leaves the house and wanders through the streets. Lying down for rest in a truck carrying sacks of grain, he falls asleep, and on awakening he finds himself again in the fields he knows so well. Megeed leaves his tale here, promising to continue the story of Hedwah's career.

This is the gist of the story, but the value of the novel is not in the plot, but in the insight it offers into the environment, the psychology of the government officials, the street scenes which reflect the hum of the largest city in Israel, the attitude of the older inhabitants to the newly arrived settlers, and the settlers' struggle for existence. Of interest are the conversations of Shlome and his numerous friends, former members of the Kibbutz. They, unlike Shlome, have no longing for their former life but are proud of their accomplishments in their business or trades and wonder at his inability to adapt himself. In short, the pulse of the new life in Israel beats high in the novel, and its beat is recorded with humor and a note of satire which, though not biting, is at times very pointed.

### iii. JACOB ARIKA

A novel with an entirely new content, one which was never dealt with in Hebrew literature before, entitled *ba-Kumtot ha-Shḥorot* (The Black Caps), by Jacob Arika deals with life in the Jewish army

in Israel. In reality, it is a series of portrayals of a number of daily episodes. It describes the treatment of the soldiers by the officers, mainly of the lower rank who come in daily contact with them, the reaction of the soldiers to such treatment, the attitude of the soldiers, especially the newly recruited ones, to service in the army, and the friction between the various types of soldiers who, by their differences in character and in background, present a veritable gathering of the exiles. The hero is Joel, born and educated in Israel who, filled with love of the land and for his people, is proud to be called to service in the Israeli army. He has an idealized conception of that service. The villain is Captain Goldstein, who has served in the army for a number of years and intends to make it his profession. His treatment of the soldiers is harsh and cruel. The aspect of life in the army as presented in the work is a sad one. An army changes very slowly, especially when a number of officers have seen service in their native countries. Joel is greatly disappointed at such conduct and his ideal notion of a Jewish army is shattered. He is embittered and frequently rebels; punished, he keeps on rebelling. He is assigned to the department of culture as Hebrew teacher to groups of soldiers recently arrived, but Captain Goldstein consistently prevents him from carrying on his work. Besides Joel, other characters, possessing finer traits, make their appearance, but the picture as a whole is a sad one.

There is also a good deal of antagonism in the army between the Western and Oriental Jews. Goldstein calls the Yemenite, Iraqi, and North African Jews black Jews, and treats them with special harshness. However, as in most novels, this one has a happy ending, at least partially. Rebellion breaks out, and with the help of Lieutenant Cohen, who was transferred from another branch to the artillery, Goldstein's authority is broken and a new spirit of cooperation is felt. Even Goldstein changes. The story ends with Joel suffering from an attack of pneumonia as a result of overwork in a Mahbarah (immigrant camp) where his group was sent to help the inhabitants in their fight against rain and storm. The novel has also a number of love scenes and several beautiful descriptions of parts of Galilee. The author prefaces his work with the statement, "I hope that the portrayal will bring changes for the better in certain areas of army service. This will be my reward." We on our part hope that he received his reward in full.

## 14. HISTORICAL NOVELS AND SHORT STORIES

## i. M. SHAMIR

Of the numerous works of fiction produced in Israel during the last quarter of a century, primarily by younger writers born and educated there the most distinguished is the historical novel by M. Shamir, *Melek Basar we-Dam* (King of Flesh and Blood). The title, however, intends to convey more than the literal meaning of the words. The term *Basar we-Dam* comes from the Talmud and refers to the weakness of man compared with Almighty God. In later literature and in common Jewish parlance, it is employed to designate a man devoid of spirituality, engrossed in pursuit of material pleasures or personal aggrandizement. It is in this sense which the author applies it to Alexander Jannai of the Hasmonaean dynasty, the hero of the book.

The Hasmonaean dynasty, which began its rule in a holy war for the sake of the Torah and Israel declined gradually, in the short period of forty years (152-105 B.C.) into becoming a worldly ruling house, and reached its lowest point of spiritual degradation during the reign of Jannai. His reign was marked by wars of conquest and defeat, by oppression of the people, by conflicts between the two parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, resulting in the rebellion of the former against the king, and in his bloodthirsty retaliation and their forced submission. Shamir, though, does not undertake to present the ramified series of events of the entire reign of Jannai, which lasted twenty-six years, but limits himself to the first fifteen years. However, even this short period encompasses a train of activities, events and conflicts which the author relates skillfully with much historical truth based on careful research, and with artistic imagination.

Shamir resorts to an interesting device which helps him greatly in the mastery of the extensive material. He divides the quantitatively large book of 555 pages into five parts, called portals: Portal of Jerusalem, Portal of Akku (Acre), of *Modiin*, of Beth Shean, and of Gaza. Each of these places serves as a symbolic center of a cluster of activities and events. Another device which enhances the value of the book and adds interest to the narrative is the revival of characters who, though mentioned in historical records, hardly play any role in the life of the period; Shamir endows them with qualities and circumstances which give them an important place in the drama.

The part named Portal of Jerusalem deals with events which tell the steps taken by Jannai in his accession to the throne and the high priesthood, notwithstanding the seniority of his brother Absalom, and also with the first five years of his reign.

The opening chapter shows how the brothers were informed of the death of their brother, King Aristobulus, who had sent them to prison on his accession. Here the author skillfully injects a brief characterization of Jannai and Absalom. He enlarges upon Jannai in the second chapter by telling of the days of his wandering in Galilee and in the heathen border kingdoms where violence and Hellenic craftiness reigned, traits which impressed themselves upon the character of the future king.

The third chapter introduces another person who plays a great role in the complicated sequence of events. This is Eliezer ben Ptorah, treasurer of the Temple. Eliezer's name is mentioned only once in the Jerusalem Talmud as a priest during the time of John Hyrcanos, who with his brother Judah was appointed to supervise the collection of the Terumah (Offering) from the people and empowered to use force. It is this function which lends importance to the character of Eliezer. The drama begins to develop. On arriving in Jerusalem and meeting the queen Shlomit, Jannai senses a threat to his plan to gain the throne, especially since Absalom was brought to the city by the Queen's messengers. They become attracted to each other, and he decides to marry her. Simultaneously, a struggle begins between him and Simon ben Shetah, brother of the Queen and head of the Pharasaic party. The Pharisees, having long looked with disfavor upon warrior kings serving as high priests, now see their opportunity to divide the two offices, and moved by Simon, the Sanhedrin decides to appoint Absalom high priest and Jannai king. For a time Jannai submits, but in his heart he hopes he will soon rise also to the high priesthood. This hope is soon realized. On the very first Day of Atonement, while Absalom is performing the service, Jannai enters the Holy of Holies and places the incense on the golden altar, thus seizing the high priesthood.

However, though he is victorious in his struggle with Simon, he wishes to appease the Pharisees and their leader, and live at peace with them until he can gather strength by increasing the army. He hopes to receive help from the Sadducees, enemies of the Pharisees, and enlists Eliezer, one of them, as counselor and assistant in all his schemes. New characters appear as the story develops, among them

Jonathan, a scion of the House of Tobias and heir to a wealthy family, who also becomes Jannai's friend for purposes of his own.

When Jannai meets Shlomit again, his feelings toward her are mixed. Eliezer and Jonathan accuse her of being the murderess of his brothers Antigonos and Aristobolus; yet in spite of the accusation, he is drawn to her and decides to take her in Levirate marriage even at the price of losing the high priesthood, for a high priest is forbidden to marry a widow. In order to carry out his plan, he refrains from opposing the Pharisees. He appoints Simon head of the Sanhedrin, lightens the burden of taxes, and sees that the offerings to the Temple are not diminished. For a short time peace reigns in the land, for Simon changes the constituency of the Sanhedrin from a majority of Sadducean members to one of Pharisees, thus justice is in the ascendancy and oppression is banished. However, this is the state of affairs before the approaching storm, to which most of the book is devoted.

Of the other four books, or portals, three, the Portal of Akku, Beth Shean, and of Gaza are given over to Jannai's stormy career during the following seven years of his reign. It begins in the Portal of Akku with a succession of scenes in the march of conquest upon Akku, undertaken in spite of the pleas of the Queen and her brother Simon to maintain peace. In this endeavor all means are employed by Jannai, brutality toward the peace-loving peasants who persistently desert the army, oppression of the people by heavy taxes, and annulment of peace treaties. But all in vain; his first successes end in defeat by Ptolemy Laturus, King of Cyprus, who came to the aid of Akku, and later turned against Jannai's forces. In presenting these events, Shamir relies mainly on the historian Josephus, adding his own great skill to the narrative.

Of special interest is the scene in which a deserter by the name of Honi is punished by the brutal king. Jannai first scorches the soles of his feet, then draws a circle around him and proclaims that whoever enters the circle will be killed, but if the man within it steps out, he will be freed. Honi escapes with great difficulty. He is no other than the pious Honi *ha-Magel* of whom the Talmud relates many wondrous stories and who is also mentioned by Josephus. His title, *ha-Magel* (The Circler) was given him by the Talmud because he drew a circle around himself before he offered his prayer for rain, saying that he would not step out of it until his prayer was answered. Shamir adds to the story an artistic interpretation of the

title, namely, one who was placed in a circle—which provides a starting point for Ḥoni's forthcoming role.

In the third book, *Modiin*, the author turns to the depiction of the other side of the medal, the power of the spiritual in Jewish life and the resistance of the Pharisees and their leaders to Jannai's brutality and tyrannical rule. It opens with a beautiful scene: the marriage of Ḥoni's daughter Naomi to José, a disciple of Judah ben Tabai, a colleague of Simon. The celebration is interrupted by the arrival of Andrus, the king's tax collector. A quarrel ensues in which the father of the groom is killed. Simon ben Shetah, president of the Sanhedrin, summons Andrus to trial. The chief tax officer, Eliezer ben Pethura's brother, hides Andrus, but Simon insists on his being brought to court. Jannai, discouraged by defeat and Laturus' invasion of Judea, submits. Simon demands that Jannai himself testify against Andrus. He comes to court but Simon cannot get a majority to sentence Andrus, who escapes. But justice is done, for José kills him. Judah ben Tabai calls a conference of spiritual leaders in order to depose Jannai, but Simon, fearing civil war, opposes it.

In the fourth book, called the *Portal of Beth Shean*, several chapters tell of the peace made with Cleopatra, mother of Laturus, who drove her son out of the land and planned to conquer it herself. But through the intervention of her Jewish general Ḥananyah, commander of her forces, she offers peace to Jannai on the payment of four hundred talents of gold. An Egyptian Jew, Diogenes, lends Jannai half of the sum. Peace is concluded, and Diogenes joins the other councilors of Jannai to help him subjugate the people. Jannai's spirits rise and he continues his oppression and tyranny, and even adopts the dissolute conduct of the Hellenistic kings. However, the spiritual aspect of Jewish life occupies an important place in this book, especially the activities of Honi, his performance of wonders, and his prayer for rain. The struggle between Jannai and the Pharisees, aggravated by his Sadducean councilors, persists but it does not come to an open break. The break occurs in the last book, the *Portal of Gaza*. The conquest of Gaza, which consummates Jannai's renewed march of victory, calls forth in him a spirit of haughtiness, and he decides to break entirely with the Pharisees and their leaders. He cancels the permit granted the Sanhedrin to practice the law of Shemitah, which calls for the remission of debts in the seventh year, and levies a special tax on entry into the Temple.

The clashes between the people and priestly tax collectors

appointed by Eliezer, the final rebellion when the people throw Ethrogim at Jannai in the Temple for disregarding the right of the pouring of water on the altar, and Jannai's response, ordering the mercenary soldiers to attack the people, are vividly described. Shamir utilizes every Talmudic source for his purpose. Jannai quells the rebellion, but does not strike at its roots. When one of his generals reports that it is ended, Jannai inquires whether Simon and the other leaders have been killed; told that they have escaped, he says, "The rebellion is not ended, but has just begun." Subsequent events prove him right.

The characterization of the leading figure of this historical drama is complete. Not only is Jannai presented as a tyrannical, strong-willed ruler with self-aggrandizement in mind, but his weakness is exposed when doubts assail him. Queen Shlomit is similarly presented as a strong-willed woman who knows how to guard her rights and dignity, even against Jannai, and who often follows his method. The entire story is drawn from history with one exception. Shamir makes Queen Shlomit the murderess of Miriam, whose grandfather Eliezer would have her marry Jannai. Although it is not factual, it is consistent with her character as drawn by Shamir. Simon's belief that good ultimately shall conquer evil, and that in the struggle between the two, the people must not use evil as a means to obtain good emphasizes the strength of his personality. The value of the work is increased by the depiction of the life in Jewish and Hellenistic cities, and by the author's topographical knowledge, which adds depth to the scenes.

Another effort by Shamir to present history in a belletristic manner is his work, *Kivsat ha-Rash* (The Lamb of the Poor Man), which tells the story of David and Bathsheba. The narrative is in the form of a diary written by Uriah the Hittite, Bathsheba's husband. Its content does not altogether agree with the story in the Bible. The diary is divided into five chapters, or nights, as the author calls them, probably referring to the times when the parts of the diary were written, for dramatic purposes.

It begins with Uriah's wonder at David's request that he leave the army camp, where he is in command of several legions which are besieging Rabat Ammon, capital of Ammon, to deliver a letter to General Joab, the commander in chief. Uriah speculates on the contents of that letter. For a moment he suspects that it contains an accusation against Joab, his dear friend, or an order to withdraw

from the siege. He is totally ignorant of the affair between David and his wife, and is without suspicion although Joab plies him with questions as to what is going on in Jerusalem. Asked why he did not visit his home when the king sent him there, Uriah merely answers, as recorded in the Bible, that it is a time of war and he does not want to indulge in pleasure while his friends in the army suffer.

He then recalls his past—revealing his deep love for David. On the whole his recollections constitute a paean of glory to the bravery, talent of leadership, and exalted character of David. Only here and there does the author inject a note of suspicion. The diary sets before us the dramatic and at times poetic story of the wanderings of David from the time he fled from Saul, immediately after he killed Goliath, until he became king of Judah in Hebron. It also reveals the noble qualities of Uriah, his loyalty to his leader, and his love for the Hebrews, whom he had come to know during his youth as many dwelled among his own people, the Hittites. It also tells of how he came to marry Bathsheba. Once more the author turns to the present and tells us of the rumored animosity of Absalom toward his father, and his threat to stir the army to rebellion. The rumors prove true; Absalom comes and Uriah is advised by a friend to escape because he may be killed as one of the loyal friends of David. For a moment Uriah fears that Joab is in league with Absalom, but he dismisses the thought.

His loyalty to David is so great that even when Absalom tells him the whole truth, that loyalty is not easily shaken. Yet doubt enters his mind, and he decides to go to Jerusalem. Before his departure, he meets Joab, who advises Uriah to escape, showing him the king's letter wherein he is ordered to find a way to send Uriah to the front without arousing suspicion. Joab wonders why the king should seek the death of his friend and valiant officer. Uriah now understands why, and this knowledge causes him deep suffering.

There pass before him recollections of his companionship with David, of the wars they waged together and of his loyalty and devotion. These are succeeded by thoughts of his present situation and of his loneliness. He is neither a Hittite nor a Jew, and his wife, the beloved lamb of the poor stranger, is taken from him, or what is worse, may have gone to David willingly. He comes to the conclusion that real strength lies in exercising power of will. He will not run from danger, but die as a free man, and he rushes into battle where a poisoned arrow strikes him.



It is difficult to guess the author's purpose in writing this drama; does he mean to show that no one can escape the consequences of sin, not even the author of the Psalms?—or that he really agrees with the words he put in the mouth of Abimelek? the Hittite, to whom he ascribes the epilogue saying that the poison of sin seeps through the generations. Be that as it may, the book is a work of art, the tragedy developed in masterly language, with here and there keen psychological penetration into the human soul.

## ii. YOĤANAN TWERSKY

Yoĥanan Twersky, whose historical and biographical novels were remarked upon in the preceding volume, has since produced a collection of historical short stories called *Lapidim be-Leilot* (Torches in the Night). The stories, or rather sketches, deal with important moments in the lives of a number of great Jewish personalities, who distinguished themselves either by literary and scholarly contributions or by exceptional deeds.

The first is of Saadia, at the time of his residence in Egypt, and of his efforts to influence the Karaites to return to tradition. He fails, and is even forced to leave the land of his birth, which along with the animosity of his opponents saddens him. Twersky sums up his feelings by way of Saadia's comment on Satan in the Book of Job: "The Satan mentioned in the book is not an angel as is usually assumed, but a man, for while man can be of great help, he is often the cause of much grief and conflict."

A day in the life of Spinoza is the next topic. The visit by the philosopher Leibnitz is drawn with skill and spiced with philosophic utterances. Leibnitz even reawakens in the mind of Spinoza the memory of the love of his youth for the daughter of his teacher, Van-den Enden, by conveying her regards to him.

Moments in the life of Moses Ḥayyim Luzzato, mystic and poet, pass before us in another sketch. The acceptance of Jekutiel of Wilna, who came to Padua to study medicine, into the circle of the initiated serves the author as a means of introducing fragments of Luzzato's mysticism. According to the author, this was intended for the improvement not only of the individual student but of the whole of Israel. There are also echoes of the opposition to Luzzato for his daring to compose a new book of Psalms.

Of special charm are the sketches of two incidents in Herzl's life: his meeting with Kaiser Wilhelm in 1902, and his reception, after

the fourth Zionist Congress, of a delegation of the Russian Zionists who opposed his Uganda plan. Both are given in great detail and project remarkable traits in Herzl's personality, emphasizing the tragic note in both situations. The meeting with Wilhelm brought Herzl mere honor, but not the help he expected; and the meeting with the delegation only worsened his health, which had then begun to fail. He feels the shadow of death, but his hope for the realization of his great dream does not diminish.

Twersky re-creates the trial of Schwartzbard for the killing of the Cossack hetman Petlyura, in revenge for the massacre of Ukrainian Jews. He presents Schwartzbard's motive and the awakening of the conscience of the jury, which was the principal factor in his being freed. Another moving sketch is the story of Janos Kurzak, who voluntarily went to the crematories with the children of the orphan asylum which he directed. Thus we catch glimpses of great moments in the lives of distinguished men.

## CHAPTER III

### ESSAYS AND CRITICISM

#### 15. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Along with poetry and fiction, essays and criticism were greatly developed literary forms during this period. The exceptional production of poetry and fiction, as well as other forms of literary expression, called forth writers whose task it was to devote themselves to evaluation and analysis. However, conditions had given birth to a multitude of problems.

These problems, which touched upon a number of fields of human endeavor and conflict—migrations, politics, diplomacy, attitudes to religious life, building of a new culture, etc.—demanded analysis, discussion, and some attempt at possible solutions. Hence, there arose the ramified, prolific activity in the fields of criticism and the essay. Limited space, however, does not allow an extensive survey of this broad field and we are forced to restrict ourselves to a few representatives from each phase of this wide form of literary expression, beginning with criticism.

#### 16. SHLOME ZEMAH

Shlome Zemaḥ, who began his literary career as a short-story writer, turned to criticism, and still later to essays of various kinds on journalistic, aesthetic, and philosophic subjects. His literary criticism began with an essay on Mordecai Zeeb Feirberg (Vol. IV, p. 54ff). As a foundation for his evaluation of this young writer, who lived only twenty-five years but whose few stories left an impression on lovers of Hebrew literature, he briefly surveys and analyzes in a severely critical manner the literature of the long Haskalah period.

This literature, says Zemaḥ, revolves around two points: an attitude of minimizing the quality and value of the inner Jewish life

in its traditional form as it was lived in the great Jewish centers of Eastern Europe; and an exaggerated, slavish reverence for the cultural values of the outside world. In addition, says he, that literature was dominated by reason, but had little emotion. In short, it was a literature of middle-aged men whose personality lacked the warmth of youth and even the reverence of old age.

Feirberg emerged from that enchanted circle. In his works we hear the beat of a warm heart full of hope, and the animation of youth. He too is dissatisfied with the older form of life and wants a change. But that change does not mean a rift between the past and the future as in the Haskalah, for his attitude to the life of the ghetto is one of affection and belief in the eventual fruition of its power if some change should come. That change, however, can only come from within, through the energy of the young men who must inherit it from their fathers who displayed heroism in the long struggle for the integrity of Judaism and the completeness of their life. Feirberg, says Zemaḥ, calls not for a change deviating from the old life, but for one which will continue that life in a finer form, more in keeping with conditions. He calls upon Hebrew literature to become the source of energy. In Zemaḥ's criticism of the Haskalah literature there is much truth, though not the whole truth, but his essay enhances the value of Feirberg's contribution.

In two later essays, Zemaḥ levels severe criticism at the literary productions of the younger Israeli writers, most of them sabras. In the first essay, *Shevirat ha-Kav* (Breaking of the Line), a number of younger poets are chastised for the lack of real content in their poems. Their main theme is love for and loyalty to the land. But, says he, besides the fact that real poetry cannot be narrowed to one subject and must possess a view of the world and of life, farseeing and on a high plane, even the theme to which they cling is bare of content. It is torn out of its roots in Jewish history and tradition, and is permeated with ephemeral thoughts which have no lasting value.

With greater severity he criticizes the form of this new poetry which is filled with strangely coined words, ungrammatical construction, and empty euphemisms. One example of such poetic writing quoted by Zemaḥ will suffice. A young poet, Halfi, sings thus:

The moon is spread  
Like half a loaf of bread,  
The heavens are prepared for a banquet,  
The soul of the world pronounces a benediction  
On the calm and the light of the stars.

Truly, says Zemaḥ, if the moon is bread lying in the skies, a meal is prepared, and a blessing and candles are in order, but what does it all mean? Zemaḥ's criticism, written in 1940, had an effect, and such pearls of expression are not found in his later poetry.

In the second essay, written in 1950, Zemaḥ takes to task the younger sabra fiction writers, Mosensohn, Shamir, Meged, and others. These writers, says he, are impressed with the mere existence of things of men and women, and there is no search for value. As a result, they overemphasize particulars which have little relation to the central point. Whether the object of the description is the beauty of nature or the human body, or an irrelevant incident in the story, it is described in excessive detail, especially if the object is a woman's body, and with so many particulars that the reader is diverted from the action of the plot.

Some writers, says he, do not indulge in lengthy portrayals of such nature, but introduce into their works many incidental stories, events, and episodes, and thus they divert interest from the central theme. With other writers, the characters, are not properly portrayed, and as a result, we obtain distorted pictures of the youth in Israel, for most of the characters are young men and women. In several, there is little interest in personality, on the authors' part, but a concentration on physical appearance.

Zemaḥ also points out defects in the style of these young writers, such as the excessive use of the future form of the verb, and many strange expressions. He devotes a short essay, called *Lashon Ilgim* (The Tongue of the Stammerers), to a strong protest against the use of slang in newspaper articles and stories. He quotes a philologist who made a special study of the subject, asserting that such usage arises from a limited vocabulary—it is a sign of linguistic poverty. Zemaḥ then asks whether Hebrew, which only recently became a spoken language, can allow such an encroachment upon its stable and accepted forms of speech. Can we, says he, fritter away the treasures of that language which our forefathers guarded so faithfully?

Zemaḥ also published a book of essays entitled *be-Yemé Masah* (In Days of Trial). Most of the essays are of a journalistic nature and deal with problems which were popular in Jewish life in Israel in the early 1940's. Two of the essays are still of value.

The first, called *Mapolet*, points out the weakness of the Marxist view of life and history, especially its extreme pragmatism, which implies a denial of the existence of any other kind of truth besides

the socio-economic one. According to this view, there is no independent form of moral truth, whether scientific, logical, or emotional. All are conditioned by materialistic necessity. Such a view, says Zemaḥ, is untenable. If you subject, says he, the value of truth to utility and the material success it may bring, then truth loses its absoluteness. If life should prove that what is considered absolute truth does not prove useful, then it must be changed or widened, or even abandoned altogether and another truth adopted. Therefore, Zemaḥ, following the French socialist, Jaurés, comes to the conclusion that the view of life and history cannot be based entirely on the socio-economic factor alone, but it must also be permeated with elements of morality and humanity.

The second essay, *Sinat Yisrael we-Schopenhauer* (Schopenhauer and Anti-Semitism), deals with the rabid anti-Semitism evident in the philosophy of Schopenhauer and attempts to find its cause. It presents a perplexing problem, for this philosopher based his entire ethical system on the virtue of compassion. Whence then such animosity toward the Jews, which is so complete that he finds nothing good in them? Zemaḥ suggests that it may be Judaism's optimistic view of life that aroused the ire of that philosopher of pessimism. However, he does not think this sufficient cause for such hatred and concludes that its source is Schopenhauer's psysical sickness. Unfortunately, says the author, this irrational psychosis influenced the Germans and was an important factor in the rise of Nazism. The essay contains a number of remarks which elucidate several points in Schopenhauer's philosophy.

### 17. ISRAEL ZMORAH

A critic and essayist whose work is distinguished both in quantity and quality is Israel Zmorah. His three-volume book, *Safrut al-Parashat ha-Dorot* (Literature at the Crossroads of Generations), can be considered a literary encyclopedia. It deals, in a large number of short essays, with every literary form and with the works of most of the poets and prose writers of the period.

The first volume, which bears the subtitle *Behinot we-Habhonot* (Tests and Discernments), begins with a general description of the character of present-day Hebrew literature. It echoes in a milder form the view of Zemaḥ and Karib by asserting that the literature of the recent past, though called new, was not really new in the sense of being a new link in the chain of national literary activity, for it

strove to deviate from the uniqueness of the Jewish spirit. It followed the slogan, "Let us be like other nations." It can therefore be considered a transition to a new literature which will be created in the environment of a national existence different from the earlier, one which will possess a national culture of an original quality. Hence, he calls the present-day literature *On the Boundary of Generations*, for it is placed between the literature of the preceding generation and the one which will follow it.

This description is followed by a series of essays on the nature of criticism and its various forms, as well as on the character and the qualities critics must possess. The important qualities says Zmorah, are a fundamental knowledge of the culture of the age, and of the degree of development of the types of literature which are being criticized, and, above all, artistic sense, for criticism is also an art. The subject matter of the work reviewed, says Zmorah, should not be the important criterion of value in the critic's judgment. The real criterion is the way it is presented, and whether the presentation has artistic quality. The critic must not aim to teach or educate, but should only present his own personal view. However, his interpretation must be given in a manner which will arouse the interest of the reader in the work he discusses.

The essays which follow deal briefly with the history of criticism, its limitations, and the state of criticism in Hebrew literature. Zmorah then sets to work in a series of essays to interpret and evaluate a number of such leading Hebrew critics and essayists as David Frishman, Jacob Fichman, Bialik, and Nahum Sokolow. In each of them he finds typical qualities which impart individual value to their role as critics and essayists.

The essays in the second part of the volume constitute a kind of introduction to the theory and practice of literature, for there is hardly a subject or form which the author does not discuss. The series includes essays on the use of poetry, on rhyming, on style and language, on translation, epigrams, proverbs, and even polemics. The last essay of the series is entitled *Who Is a Classic Writer?* He quotes T. S. Eliot's definition of a classic: a classic writer is one who draws in his writings upon all the possible elements of the language he writes in. Applying this test to the Hebrew literature of our time, Zmorah comes to the conclusion that Agnon is the classic writer of a great period in Hebrew literature, namely, that of Rabbinic and Hassidic literature. He is the one who utilizes every form of expres-

sion in the Hebrew language in that period, and his works constitute its hallmark in style, and in this consists his greatness. Zmorah's statement contains much truth, but whether it contains the whole truth is open to doubt.

Volumes two and three deal respectively with interpretation and evaluation of a number of poets, novelists, and short-story writers. Obeying his own rules of criticism and striving to demonstrate them in practice, he succeeds in presenting all their good points, and at times even calls attention to their weaknesses.

### 18. A. KARIB

The voice of criticism against the literature of the entire Haskalah period, which was raised by Zemaḥ in 1914, has gathered force during the decades since that time. It broke into a raucous deafening shout by Abraham Karib, poet, critic, and essayist, in his work entitled *Atarah le-Yosbnah* (Time to Return the Old Crown).

In the introductory essay, the author, in the name of *Ahabat Yisrael* (Love of Israel) draws up a list of severe charges against the writers of belles-lettres of the Haskalah period. They never attempted, says he, to reveal the light of the high spirituality which permeated the soul of the Jewish masses. On the contrary, they pounced upon every defect in conduct which in most cases was primarily due to the severe struggle for existence. They even labeled these defects Jewish traits in their stories, novels, or narrative poems. The rays of light were always shed by these writers upon the Maskilim, the enlightened. Thus is the act of condemnation drawn up by Karib against the writers of the Haskalah period.

To buttress this condemnation, a number of chapters are devoted to two of the leading writers of the period, Mendele Moker Seforim and David Frishman who form the main target for Karib's biting criticism. His analysis of Mendele's novels and short stories is complete and penetrating. There is hardly a story in which Karib does not find the tendency to distort the features of Jewish life consciously or unconsciously. He admits the great artistry of portrayal possessed by Mendele, but claims that this artistry is expressed primarily in the description of material subjects. Karib says that Mendele always describes the nose rather than the eyes; the long kapota rather than the heart which beats under it; the house and the furniture and not the spirit of piety and Jewishness which pervades its atmosphere. He also asserts that in Mendele's conscious personality there was no real



inner bond between him and the masses. He always looked at them from above, and hence his strength lay in showing the externals, the material, and even the aspects of animal life.

He points to the fact that with the exception of a beautiful short description of the Sabbath, the source of which may be found in Heine, there is no picture of Jewish holidays in his stories. The author further emphasizes Mendele's love of animality by pointing to his symbolizing the Jewish people by a mare in his novel *ba-Susa* (The Mare), and exclaims, "Whoever heard of such a comparison?" Karib, however, forgets that no less a person than Solomon, author of Song of Songs, sings of his people, "I compare thee, my love, to a steed (Le-Sussati) in Pharoah's chariots" (Song of Songs, I:9). The great Akiba, who said that the Song of Songs is the holiest of the Holy Books, seems not to have taken umbrage at this simile. Besides, the poor mare which bears on its back heavy burdens, and often cringes under the whip of its riders, be they masters or slaves, is a fair symbol of the fate of the Jewish group in Galuth.

Frishman, the next target of Karib's harsh criticism, fares no better than Mendele, and in a way even worse. True, Karib cannot find similar derogatory expressions of the Jewish character in Frishman's writings as in Mendele's, though there is no lack of defects and faults. The attack is on all fronts, for Frishman had several failings. He was a poet, short-story writer, and leading critic of the preceding generation. This versatility serves Karib as a starting point for his attack, but the short stories bear the brunt.

Frishman, says Karib, writes stories of all kinds and types, for he has no type or form which is his own. He possesses descriptive talent and style, but plays with them to produce an effect on the readers. True, says he, Frishman wrote a number of stories in which the Jewish spirit is reflected, but, asserts the critic, Frishman was a stranger to real Jewishness. He points to several veiled expressions in the group of stories called *Midbar* (Desert), which aim to show that the Torah stifles joy in life.

There is no doubt that there is much truth in Karib's contentions and views, especially in regard to Mendele and Brenner, a number of whose stories also come in for biting attacks; but these do not tell the whole truth. Nor is he entirely justified in regard to Frishman. It is true that his *Midbar* stories display a negative tendency, but a number of his other short stories are charged with an exalted Jewish

spirit, and Karib's arguments aiming to minimize their worth are groundless.

Thus, the value of the story *Shloshah she-Ochlu* (The Three Who Ate), in which Frishman presents three rabbis who, during an epidemic, called upon the people to break their fast on the Day of Atonement, is impaired by Karib with the question, "Why did the rabbis not eat first, but wait for the people to eat?" Can the critic not understand that the rabbis did not expect the people to eat in the synagogue, but meant that they should go to their homes. But, when the people in their piety hesitated to eat on the Holy Day in spite of the danger, the rabbis were forced to set an example. The same unjust criticism also applies to other impressive stories. We only want to note that Karib forgot to mention Frishman's story, *Kupat Rabbi Meir Baal Nes* (The Charity Box of Rabbi Meir, the Miracle Worker), in which the tale is told of a poor woman who suffered hunger for days, and finally decided to take a few pennies from the charity box to buy bread. The bread was bought but not eaten, for when she was about to put the bread to her mouth, fear of the sin of robbing a charity box overwhelmed her, and she fainted while holding the bread in her hand. Is there a higher degree of devotion to charity than the one here portrayed?

Still less true is the wholesale condemnation of the belletrists of the Haskalah period, summed up in epithets applied to them, such as dissenters, antagonists, rebels, and destroyers. Do Abraham Dob and Micah Levenson, creators of a large part of the poetry of the period, and Mapu and Smolenskin, the leading novelists and short story writers of the time, deserve such epithets? Even in the literature of the early decade of the post-Haskalah period, when echoes of the rebellion against, and deviation from, traditional Jewish spiritual values are heard, there are not many authors who deserve such terms.

Another work of Karib, *Iyunnim* (Cursory Discussions), is primarily a collection of short literary essays. Their purpose is not criticism, but rather to point out the contributions of the authors. While most of the essays deal with the Hebrew writers of the post-Haskalah period, several of them deal with the Books of Ruth and Esther, and with Rashi. These essays are very short, but Karib manages to make some remarks which have an original quality. Thus, in a few lines he points out the essential difference between Rashi's commentary on the Talmud and that on the Bible.

Rashi, in his commentary on the Talmud, says he, restrained his creative ability and limited himself to elucidating the text, and thus opened the Talmud to all. His commentary is therefore the foundation upon which additions could be made. Rashi, says Karib, in thus restraining his creative power in this commentary, succeeded in giving us the actual "capital" of the Talmud. All commentaries on this great work are merely interest on this "capital." But when Rashi came to the Bible, which had been dealt with by the Halakah and Agada for ages, he gave us both the "capital" or the Peshat, the actual meaning of the text, and the interest in the form of a remarkable quintessence of the age-old Agada, adding views and thoughts which have their source in the very soul of the people.

In an essay on Bialik, Karib points out that his greatness is expressed in combining two opposite phases of spiritual activity; one which consists in discovering new horizons in the realm of the spirit, whatever form it be, whether in thought or poetry or fiction. This is the share of the creator. The other phase is the enrichment of the heritage of the predecessor; this is the share of the heir. Bialik, in his poetry, succeeded in combining both phases. He is not altogether satisfied with the heritage of the ages, and seeks a wider horizon, but he does not neglect the heritage. He continues its path, but sheds new light on it. "He was," says Karib, "the last of the poets of the old, and the first of the poets of the new generation." It is indeed a very short description of Bialik's contribution, but it contains the essence of his greatness.

Of special interest is the section in the book, *Mi-Ginzé Nistorim* (Hidden Treasures) which contains short essays devoted to writers whose works constitute real literary contributions, but for one reason or another were hardly noticed by critics. One of such writers is Siku (Joseph Smilansky) in whose stories of the life of the Ukrainian Jewish peasants, Karib sees not only art but a poetic note as well. He finds two outstanding characteristics in the stories of Siku. First is a fine portrayal of a new type of Jewish town, a town whose inhabitants are dominated by two forms of devotion, one to the Jewish heritage, and the other to the soil they till. The second characteristic is Siku's emphasis, in his Hassidic stories, on the love for the beauty of nature which the leaders of that movement possessed. In such stories, says the author, Siku injects a note of religious poetry inspired by nature in which these leaders see the revelation of God's glory and creative power. Karib thus continues to find the

good, the charm, and the originality typical of the works of many other writers.

#### 19. DOB SDAN

Another collection of interpretative essays is the *Abné Boḥan* (Testing Stones) by Dob Sdan. His scope is broader than Karib's. It includes not only the Hebrew writers of the post-Haskalah period, but also several distinguished Yiddish writers, folk dramatists, and several great personalities who left their mark upon Jewish thought and life. Thus, in this gallery of men of spirit, we find Rachel Morfargo, the Italian Hebrew poetess of a century ago, Naphthali Herz Imber, in addition to Bialik, Tchernichowski, and other leading poets of the last period; Shalom Aleichem and the folk dramatist, Goldfaden, in the midst of a row of leading Hebrew novelists; Nathan Birenbaum and Rabbi Cook side by side with Aḥad-ha-'Am and A. D. Gordon.

In all the essays of the long series, Sdan attempts to find the trait which either serves as the fundamental element in the creative ability of the person discussed, be he poet, writer, or leader, or to explain apparent contradictions in their activity. The contradiction displayed in Tchernichowski's poetry—on the one hand, many poems express excessive adoration of the Greek spirit; on the other, a series of Idylls, beautifully portray and glorify the genuine Jewish life of tradition—is explained by our essayist as a result of two influential periods in the life of the poet. The poems were composed in his youth, when he was overwhelmed by his contact with the life and culture of the outside world, whereas the Idylls were written later when the memories of his childhood, saturated with the spirit of Jewishness, were awakened. The love for those childhood days was always with him, though dormant. When the enthusiasm for the new world in which he was immersed was somewhat abated, love broke forth from its slumber and the Idylls were the result.

Sdan succeeds in eliciting in a few lines the typical traits of most of the characters in the numerous stories of Joseph Ḥayyim Brennen. All, he says, represent the young Jew whose life and soul were open to the winds of different cultural influences. Hence, there was a struggle in his heart which was strengthened by the tragic life of his people and his generation. The vision of redemption, or national rehabilitation, was to the youth of that time only a "perhaps," while the tragedy of Jewish life in the present was a certainty. One who

is acquainted with Brenner's novels and stories will recognize the truthfulness of that characterization.

In the four short articles on Herzl and his leadership, Sdan endeavors to show that Herzl was not moved in his activity merely by the poetic vision of a great dream, but primarily by the certainty of belief in the future realization of his idea. He finds this certainty in one of his letters published by his latest biographer, Bain. Herzl wrote letters to a number of great men and enclosed a copy of his book, *The Jewish State*, in order to gauge their reaction to its idea. One of the letters was sent to the philosopher Herbert Spencer. In that letter he wrote, "We are guests in this world, and according to the natural process you will most likely depart from it earlier than I, who am only thirty-seven years old. Being convinced that a Jewish State will be established in the future in one form or another, I would like to know your view of the movement which was recently launched by me for the realization of the idea." Sdan sees in this brief letter a key to Herzl's Zionist activity. It was the certainty of its realization which moved him to assume the burden of leadership.

Of special interest is Sdan's explanation of the difference of the views of Hayyim Sonnenfeld, the arch opponent of Zionism, and Rabbi Cook, its follower and friend of the nonreligious young Halutzim (pioneers), Rabbi Cook, says Sdan, was no greater liberal than Rabbi Sonnenfeld, nor did a thought ever enter his mind in doubt of the authority of Jewish tradition in its fullest sense. The difference consisted in that Sonnenfeld and his like saw in the rising movement of the Halutzim in the Holy Land a life of complete secularism; they considered it sinful, and estranged themselves from its followers. Rabbi Cook, on the other hand, even denied the possibility that a life of secularism could exist in the Holy Land. The present situation was to him ephemeral, and he saw the first step of a return to complete Jewishness in the very tilling of the holy soil by the pioneers. Hence he befriended the Halutzim in order to hasten that return.

In this way the essays of Sdan elicit much that is of value in the literary and the spiritual activity within Jewish life of the preceding two generations, and makes it comprehensible to present-day readers.

## 20. STEINMAN

The collection of critical, or rather interpretative, essays by Eliezer Steinman entitled *be-Maagal ha-Dorot* (In the Path of Generations)

is intended, as the author says, not only to reveal the fine qualities of the works discussed, but to improve our own conception of life and art. Furthermore, says he, judging, the work of the predecessors in the light of present-day views and events, we impart a new form and light to the original works.

Steinman carried out the aims he set for himself in an almost perfect manner. His essays, covering a wide range in time beginning with Abraham Mapu (the middle of the nineteenth century) and ending with the poetess Rachel (1890-1931), bring out the eternal qualities of the literary creations and remove many shadows cast upon the works by critics, making the hidden light shine forth in full glory. One example will suffice.

In his essay on Mendele Moker Seforim (Shalom Yakob Abramowitz), the much praised and also the much criticized writer of the near past, he rejects the accepted critical views of his novels, *Sefer ha-Kabzanim* (The Book of the Beggars), and points out its fine quality. This novel was attacked by most of the critics, who accused the writer of degradingly depicting the Jewish world as one inhabited by beggars. Steinman claims that Mendele intended to show the strength and vitality of the Jews, their ability to preserve human values under all circumstances. Mendele's Jewish beggar is not the downtrodden miserable man who lost all sense of value. He does not plead for compassion while asking for charity; he demands compassion as if he were collecting a debt—Mendele knows the meaning of the Jewish term for charity, *Zedakah*, which is justice. The donor merely performs an act of justice. Similar defenses, which are really fine short essays on Mendele and other writers, who are apparently of a negative character, are scattered throughout Steinman's work.

Several of his essays impress us with their skillful and artistic form. They are neither critical nor interpretative, but are presented by him in the form of interviews. One is with the famous poet, short-story writer, and critic, David Frishman. Frishman expresses his views on the literature of the period in general, on the works of several famous writers, on the state of Hebrew belles-lettres, and on criticism and its shortcomings in a continuous monologue. This delightful monologue, whether actual or imaginative, is tinged with irony and humor, reflecting the versatility of Frishman.

Another describes a visit to the house of Simon Berenfeld, the author of many scholarly works, including a four-volume introduction to the Bible, a history of Jewish philosophy, and numerous historical

and biographical works. Although he was blinded in later life, Berenfeld's literary activity was not interrupted. Our essayist visited him at the end of a decade of blindness and listened reverently to him discuss a number of works he planned to write in the near future. Berenfeld's talk, as reported by Steinman, is interspersed with numerous quotations, philosophical and historical remarks, and criticism of contemporary Jewish affairs. Steinman, however, does not merely record Berenfeld's words, but supplements them with his own remarks, reflecting both Berenfeld's personality and the primary characteristics of his scholarly contribution.

Several other essays are devoted to outstanding literary personalities in a semi-belletristic style among them, the mystic philosopher and publicist, Hillel Zeitlin, and the octogenarian short story-writer, J. D. Silberbush. Thus does Steinman tread the path of generations, enabling us to evaluate the literary products which struck root in it.

#### 21. Z. WISLOWSKI

A prolific and distinguished literary essayist of the period, Zebi Wislowski, is the author of a collection of essays, *Yehidim be-Reshut ha-Rabim* (Individuals in the Sphere of the Many), which form an important contribution to this branch of literature. The very title, based on Hebrew euphuistic expression, indicates the general direction and purpose of the essays, which is to show the influence of the generation, upon outstanding literary figures, and vice versa. Chiefly, they aim at a description of the intellectual, spiritual, and social climate in both Jewish and non-Jewish life, and its influence upon the genesis of the views, thoughts, and attitudes on the problems of life as expressed by the poets, writers, and thinkers of the period. In addition, the essayist endeavors to facilitate interpretation and appreciation of their works.

The number of authors is considerable. Almost all outstanding literary figures of the last half century are included: the poets Bialik and Tchernichowski; such representatives of Jewish thought as Ahad ha-'Am, Martin Buber, and Jacob Klatzkin; such scholars as Simon Berenfeld, Hayyim Tchernowitz, and Ezekiel Kaufmann; such historians as Joseph Klausner and Simon Dubnow; such essayists as David Frishman and Micah Joseph Berdichewski, as well as several short-story writers and the famous orator and autobiographer, She-maryah Levin.

Wislawski is well prepared for his task. Being versed in philosophical, historical, and, especially, in the social theories and views of the period, he offers a comprehensive, though brief, resumé of these views, and points out how they helped to mold the thought of such men as Ahad ha-'Am. Well informed, and steeped in all aspects of Jewish life of the last half century, he describes the effects of the changes in that life. He devotes much space to the tragic results of these changes, the rift which was created between the young and the old, youth's rejection of Jewish tradition, and the rise of movements which threatened the unity of Jewish life and the uniformity of Jewish feeling.

He recaptures the fear which seized those who were rooted in Judaism at the destructive threat to Jewish spirituality, and dwells upon individual attempts to heal the breach. Ahad ha-'Am offered his solution to the great problem by calling for the establishment of a spiritual center in Palestine. Bialik, in his vigorous and beautiful poems, sheds glorious light on the soul of the Jewish past and emphasizes its mighty spiritual power, and thus his poetry became the poetry of revival and influenced other poets, even the rebel Berdichewski, who continually demanded a change in Jewish values; and yet, says Wislawski, "He searched all his life for the bricks in order to build a bridge between the ideas and ideals dominant in the general culture and those of his own nation."

These descriptions of views and theories on one hand, and of conditions in Jewry on the other hand, which Wislawski offers as introductory material to almost every essay, are of great interest and are splendid in themselves, but they suffer from diffusion. Although they help greatly in the understanding of the genesis of the views and attitude of authors, in most essays, the very essence of the views is obtuse and escapes the reader. Similarly, the author often dwells upon the dominant characteristics of the writers discussed, but neglects their actual contribution.

Thus, in his fine essay on Berdichewski, in which he clearly reveals the stages of his rebellion against tradition, Wislawski reiterates his assertion that most of Berdichewski's views, doubts, and heretic and negative attitudes stem from sources within Judaism, without troubling to point out what these sources are. In the essay in which the various epochs of Klausner's literary career are presented, Wislawski devotes a chapter to his role as historian. He outlines the various



methods of writing history and asserts that Klausner employs the genetic method, without showing how he utilizes this method. In contrast, in another essay Wislowski provides a fine glimpse of Dubnow's historical method and philosophy of Jewish history, in addition to stringent criticism of the latter.

Notwithstanding these shortcomings, Wislowski's work is an important contribution to the understanding of Jewish life and thought as well as to the evaluation of the leading literary figures during the last half century. Its value is greatly increased by the beauty of its style.

## CHAPTER IV

### YIDDISH LITERATURE: THE SHORT STORY AND THE NOVEL

#### 22. *INTRODUCTORY NOTE*

It has already been pointed out that, during this last period, Yiddish literature possessed almost no geographic center of production, but was being created in numerous places throughout the world. The cause for this change is well known—the destruction of the great Jewish settlements in Eastern European countries, and the annihilation of most of the Jews who lived in those lands and whose language was Yiddish. These changes in Jewish life brought about a fundamental change in the character and nature of the Yiddish literature of the period. It no longer reflects the distinctive life of great Jewish centers, molded by age and tradition, for these centers have ceased to exist. Remnants of the millions who formerly inhabited the old centers are scattered in many lands—France, South America and Israel. With the exception of Israel, new forms of Jewish Diaspora life began to spring up in these Jewish settlements, influenced by the life and culture of the new environment. The Yiddish writers, who migrated along with their brethren, went on portraying the former type of life for a time, for it best suited their literary tastes as well as their readers'. But later, when some adjustment of the settlers to the new environment took place, the writers began to reflect somewhat the new way of life.

Manners and customs impressed by centuries of living in certain countries, and stamped by a millennial tradition, cannot be erased from the minds and hearts of the writers nor of the readers; consequently, memories and portrayals of the life in retrospect occupy an important place in the literature of the period. In addition, the catastrophe which overtook East European Jewries, the effects of which became an indelible part of the life of the immigrants, plays an im-

portant role. As a result, episodes of the Days of Terror, in various phases and facets, form a large part of the themes of the prose literature of the period, and to a lesser degree also of poetry.

Furthermore, descriptions of Jewish life in new localities is not limited to the new settlements, but includes the life of old settlements in non-European countries, distinct in type and character, which hitherto had made no appearance in Yiddish literature. Yiddish writers wandered in many parts of the world during the war and immediately after its conclusion; Jewish life in North Africa, the United States, and certain Asiatic countries are reflected to a large degree in the writings of a number of these authors. In spite of the fact that this country for more than half a century has been an important center of Yiddish literature, things have nevertheless changed. Of the writers whose literary contributions were enumerated in the previous volume, a large number have since died. Most of the writers who replaced them are recent immigrants, and the theme of the catastrophe and the East European life of the past suits them best. The fact that much of the Yiddish literary work by the writers in the United States is published in Argentina and in other South American countries shows that the center of demand for Yiddish books lies outside. Yiddish literary production in the United States is part of the world Yiddish literature and will be included in this survey.

### 23. PORTRAYAL OF JEWISH LIFE IN NEW CENTERS

A novel, *Dem Tepper's Techter* (The Potter's Daughters), by Moses Dluzhonowski reflects Jewish life in Morocco, North Africa. It begins with the story of the engagement celebration of Dinah and Jochebed, the two daughters of Jacob the Potter, a poor Jew who dwells in the ghetto of the city of Nagazi. Yochebed is betrothed to Joseph Medinah, a rich merchant of Rabat. While the joyous betrothal feast is in progress Jochebed suddenly disappears from the house, and her sister Dinah goes in search of her. It turns out that Jochebed went to meet her Arab lover Hassan, with whom she has been having an affair for some time. Dinah remonstrates with her and advises her to forget Hassan, but to no avail.

Despite her feelings, Jochebed leaves for Rabat and marries Medinah, and then begins a series of events which bring much grief and suffering not only to Jochebed, but to her whole family, and even to the Jews of Nagazi. Hassan pursues her and even visits her at Medinah's home; he asks her to go with him, and when she refuses he

swears revenge. The result of her affair becomes evident by her pregnancy, and when Medinah divorces her she returns to her father's house where she gives birth to her child. Hassan carries out his plans for revenge by inciting an attack upon the Jews in the ghetto. The Jews defend themselves and Hassan is wounded; Nissim, Dinah's husband, loses an arm, incapacitating him for work, and Dinah's mind becomes deranged from grief.

Jochebed then departs with her child for Casablanca where she leaves the child at the door of the synagogue and goes in search of work. Her fate pursues her even there, for Hassan meets her, asks for the child, and invites her to come with him. When she refuses, he takes revenge, for he succeeds, by manipulating the Moroccan law against Jews in a strange city, to place her in a house of prostitution.

At this point, the author weaves another complicated story into his plot. Alexander Blum, a painter of note, flees with his wife, Penina, from Paris when the Germans conquered the city, and in the rush toward the Spanish border, she gives birth to a child, a girl. Immediately after that, Alexander is forced to leave the military ambulance in which they were traveling, while Penina continues the journey. He searches for his wife and child, but in vain. In order to save himself, he boards a boat for Casablanca where he is asked by a rich Jew, who adopted the child left at the synagogue and had heard of Jochebed, to find out whether the child is hers. Alexander visits Jochebed and she tells him her story. Impressed by her fate and also by her beauty, he decides to free her. He succeeds and they become friends and even fall in love, though Alexander has not entirely given up the hope of finding his wife and child.

Shortly thereafter, Alexander leaves for the States and he promises to send for Jochebed. As things go well with him; he keeps his promise; their love grows and they plan to marry.

The plan, however, is not realized immediately, for a letter arrives from Penina telling him she has been freed from a concentration camp. He brings her and the child to the States, but her face is disfigured by the tortures she underwent and his love for her has died. After a short time, Penina agrees to divorce him, and Alexander marries Jochebed. The author, however, endeavors to make the ending happy and complete; Hassan loses a leg in a fight with Jews and finally commits suicide. He also brings about the restoration of sanity to Dinah through the efforts of a Jewish physician from Rabat.

The plot is somewhat complicated, yet the numerous episodes are

skillfully joined, and while there is no necessary chain of causality, the connection is not a haphazard one, and fits the time in which the events take place. In a series of portrayals we see the dire poverty of the ghetto dwellers, their suffering at the hands of their masters, which they bear with patience but not with complete subjection. At times, their courage rises and they dare to take revenge upon their oppressors as in the case of Hassan. We also get a glimpse into the life of the richer Jews who left the ghetto and who try to imitate the rich Effendis by establishing a harem, and even in old age search for young and beautiful brides.

In the drawing of the numerous characters which appear in the story, the older generation comes off better than the younger one. Joseph Medinah, except for his pursuit of young and beautiful women, displays a fine moral character. When he discovers Jochebed's relations with Hassan and that she is pregnant by him, he treats her with gentleness, gives her a large sum of money to provide for her expenses for some time, and supports her poor father. Aaron Harsin, the rich merchant of Casablanca who adopted Jochebed's child without knowing its origin, helps to free her from the house of shame. On the other hand, Marcel, the son of Joseph, keeps a French mistress and makes love to his father's wife besides. Even the heroine, Jochebed, is far from a moral character. She continues to love Hassan, even in her misery before she meets Alexander, her only reason being the powerful physical attraction, for her answer to her sister's reproach is "His kisses are so warm." Thus Moroccan Jewish life is reflected in the novel in both its phases, the positive and the negative.

There are a number of collections of short stories which reflect Jewish life to a degree in the new centers of settlement. I say to a degree, for not all the stories portray that life; some of them hark back to the past. Rose Polatnick's collection, *Bein Roish fun Atlantic* (The Roar of the Atlantic), contains a number of stories that offer a glimpse into Jewish life in Brazil. In one of them, we hear a mother's complaint to her friend of the way she is treated by her son, who has become rich in this land of gold. He supplies her with all comforts, but she cannot live in his home because the dietary laws are not observed; she lives in a rented room. He also keeps her from visiting his home when parties are taking place, as her aristocratic daughter-in-law is ashamed to introduce her to her friends. She is not even invited to her grandson's birthday. The friend, on the other

hand, is happy; her son, who is far from rich, treats her with respect and reverence.

In another story we meet the immigrants who, having adjusted themselves to their new environment, are continually struggling so that the spark of Jewishness will not be entirely extinguished in their children. Wevkey, raised in poverty in a small Polish town, and given little education by his widowed mother, succeeds, on settling in Brazil, in becoming rich, and pursues a way of life in which Jewishness is barely evident. Yet when his daughter is about to marry a Gentile, he becomes furious and beats her severely vowing that he will never permit such a marriage unless the young man embraces Judaism. Fortunately, the young man, on the advice of his father who is liberal-minded, agrees to the condition and peace reigns in the family.

A story with the peculiar title, *ueYakhel-Pekuda*, tells how two men, Jacob and Moshe, on settling in Brazil, assume roles quite opposite to those played in their home town in Poland. There, Jacob was the son of a rich, respected man in the community and well educated, whereas Moshe's father was a horse dealer and of little account, and Moshe himself possessed little education. Oddly enough, the two clung together and were therefore named Wa-Yakhel Pekudé, after the two portions in Exodus frequently read together on the Sabbath. Pekudé, or Moshe, arrived in Brazil first and became very rich and married Mirel, a girl who had been in love with Jacob. Wa-Yakhel, or Jacob, arrived later and married Pesse, the girl whose love Pekudé rejected. Wa-Yakhel tried his hand at many trades but without success, and finally became a Hebrew teacher. As the years pass, Pekudé's son meets Wa-Yakhel's daughter and falls in love with her. The rich Moshe objects to the union, but when the son insists, he relents and the two friends, estranged by circumstances, are reunited. The stories are well told, and the author often displays admirable insight into his characters.

In the second collection of stories by A. Greenberg, *Liebschaft* (Love), the locale is Argentina, but these do not reflect the typical Jewish life in that country. The episodes transcend locale and could have taken place in any country where Jews live. There is, however, one exception. The first story, *Don Nahum*, tells of the sickness of the rich industrialist, Nahum, who lies paralyzed for two years, and of his conversation with two visitors. There are moments which shed light on Argentinian Jewish life. One of the visitors complains that the

manager of Naḥum's factory does not fill his orders and always sends him less than he asked for. He attributes this to the anger the manager bears him because his daughter married a Gentile. Naḥum, of course, denies it and praises the manager for his good work for the State of Israel. From such remarks, we can infer that, for the present at least, Judaism is well established among the Jews in Argentina.

As for the other stories, though they are of a general nature, their literary worth is not affected adversely. Of special interest is the simple-plotted title story, *Liebschaft*. In one day, two people died—in the Jewish hospital—a man who left a widow and a son, Maurice, and a woman who left a husband and a son. They were buried the same day and were mourned by the survivors for a long time.

Ultimately, the widower married the widow and the dead were forgotten. There was one being who did not forget the woman—her dog. One day, when the dead woman's coat was hung up for an airing, the dog wrapped himself in it and howled mournfully. Her son also began to cry, and soon the husband joined in,—the husband, son, and dog making one chorus, the wife and her son another, all crying.

Yankel Friedman, in his book *Azoi hot gesogt Yankel Zshak* (Thus Said Yankel Zshak), draws a series of humorous sketches of the vicissitudes of a Jewish immigrant from Poland in his new environment, in the city of Lyons, France. The hero, Yankel, now called Zshak, a tailor by trade, is a typical representative of the stratum of Jewish population in the ghetto, usually called in Yiddish literature *Amkab*. i.e., those who possess folk character. He is endowed with a keen mind, and is able to meet all circumstances in a light-hearted manner. He is on the whole successful, yet he claims that he has no *mazel* (luck). He is the narrator of his adventures, which are many, concerning his own life, and also events in the lives of his neighbors, Jews and non-Jews, of the workers in his tailor shop and later in his factory. In addition, there are descriptions of his vacations spent in various places and of visits to a number of cities. Thus we glimpse life in France among the Jews as well.

The entire narrative is permeated with an atmosphere of good-natured humor expressed both in the concatenation of events and in Yankel's remarks. He reminds us of two of Shalom Aleichem's leading characters, Tevia der Milchiger and Menahem Mendel, minus the scholarship of the former, who frequently misquotes Biblical verses and expressions, and of the fantastic business speculations of

the latter. The humor consists primarily of incongruous behavior and witty remarks. The following will serve as an illustration of Yankel's wit. Visiting Nice, a city frequented by English tourists, Yankel says to his friend, "Let us speak Yiddish, for the French do not understand the language. They will then take us for Englishmen, who also speak a language not understood by them." Again, whenever his wife falls sick, Yankel himself runs to the physician to find out whether he is well. He explains his reason for doing so, saying, "For a sick wife it is necessary that the husband be healthy." Thus Yankel Zshak's narrative offers pleasant entertainment to the reader.

#### 24. STORIES OF ADJUSTMENT TO LIFE IN ISRAEL

##### i. SAMUEL ISBAN

Among the novels, of which the theme is a type of Jewish life hitherto not dealt with in Yiddish literature, belongs Samuel Isban's novel, *Die Familie Karp*. Isban is a prolific writer; many of his novels and short stories deal with American life, as well as with life in other countries. This one is set in Israel during the 1920's.

Leib Karp, a rich Polish Jew, after being grossly insulted by an official of the Polish government established after the First World War, decides to leave Poland and settle in Palestine. After selling his business, he invests his money, while passing through Vienna, in high-quality merchandise, and he, with his wife Rachel, his son Benjamin, and his daughter Elizabeth, arrive by boat one sunny day in Jaffa. Leib Karp is confident that with the money he will realize from the sale of his merchandise he will be able to establish a profitable business, and for several weeks the family is happy, especially Leib, who rejoices in being able to live in the hallowed land.

Things turn out otherwise. For a long time he is unable to sell the merchandise, as there is no demand for high-priced articles. He finally succeeds, through an army officer, Ephraim Feldstein, a son of his friend, to sell the goods at a low price and opens a small restaurant in Jaffa. Soon after, a pogrom breaks out in Jaffa and his restaurant is destroyed, the furniture taken away, and Leib is reduced to poverty.

With the help of friends he opens a small grocery store, which is managed by his wife, and his situation improves. Leib even plans to build a house for the family. He buys a plot, starts to build, and is about to celebrate its dedication. But at this time speculation in real estate is going on among the Jews in Palestine. An agent persuades Leib to sell his house at a profit.



Through all these difficulties he gets no help from his children. Caught by the spirit of pioneering, his son joins a Kibbutz and helps to build the country. His daughter, too, goes to live in a colony where she meets a young man named Abner, an archeologist, serving as a guide for a tourist company, and they fall in love.

Leib's prosperity does not last very long. He is frequently advised by friends to settle on the land in Galilee, but he is caught by the spirit of speculation, and finally, when the bubble of economic prosperity in the land bursts, he loses everything; and to make matters worse, his wife dies. The tribulations of Leib do not cease. These are turbulent years and attacks on the Jewish colonies become frequent. Defense groups are formed in which both Benjamin and Abner take leading parts. In one of the battles with the Arabs, Benjamin is killed, and Leib, overwhelmed by the loss of his son and by his loneliness, accepts an invitation from an old friend, a colonist in Merchavia, to visit him, and there he meets his daughter and Abner. This ends the story of Leib's vicissitudes in Palestine.

The plot is well constructed, and the narrative is smooth and arouses our interest. But the value of the novel lies primarily in the fine reflection of Jewish life in Palestine during the stormy decades of the twenties. The spirit of resolve in the young generation to build the established colonies and Kibbutzim and to continue building in spite of attacks, even at the sacrifice of their lives, is powerfully felt. We hear the protests of the old colonists and men of learning and prominence against the unhealthy speculation prevailing in the land, their pleas to the newly arrived immigrants to desist from crowding in the cities, but to settle on the plains of Galilee and till the soil. Many hear the call and the process of conquering the land receives a great impetus. Also well drawn are the scenes describing the heroic defense of the colonies and Kibbutzim against Arab attacks, some of them deeply moving. Isban's novel thus offers a fine glimpse into Jewish life in Palestine during a turbulent decade.

## ii. ISAAC PERLOW

Isaac Perlow portrays in his collection of short stories, *In Eigenen Land* (In Our Own Land), the difficulties of adjustment faced by the *Olim* (settlers), who arrived in Israel after the Second World War. Some came from concentration camps, others from wandering in many lands after escaping the great catastrophe. The stories sometimes contain a tragic note; some present a tragi-comic situation; still

others contain criticism of the attitude of the *Pekidim* (officials) who are supposed to care for the settlers and help them in their adjustment.

In one story our sympathy is aroused by the disappointment of Benjamin Confer. Confer, a man in his sixties, arrives in Israel with two friends. The friends worry over their difficulties in the new situation, but Confer, who was a Zionist leader in his city in Poland, is confident that he will be taken care of by the government. He even carries a formal suit of clothes in his luggage to wear at a reception in his honor. Things do not turn out this way; his fellow travelers succeed in finding work, but not Confer. In vain he runs to various offices showing his record of Zionist activity, but nothing happens. Finally, receiving a call to come to work, he rushes to the office with great expectations.

However, he is told that the only work available is either as a watchman or as driver of a garbage wagon. He is comforted when told that all present heads of government, had worked at menial jobs on their arrival, even the premier himself. He decides to accept the position as wagon-driver. Advised to put on suitable clothes, he rushes home and dons his formal suit, last worn at a great Zionist affair, and reports for work. He remarks sarcastically to the surprised official that the clothes are proper for the high position thus obtained through influence, and, mounting the driver's seat, he proceeds to his task. This was the reward of Benjamin Confer.

A tragi-comic episode is the subject of another story. Selig Weingarten arrives in Haifa in 1948 when the State was established, after tossing around the high seas in an immigrant boat that was returned several times by the Mandatory Power. He and his family expect help from his brother Leibel, who has lived there ten years. Leibel's wife, on the other hand, expects that her brother-in-law, like many other settlers, is bringing with him valuable household articles, such as a refrigerator or a victrola. Disappointment is in store for all. Selig learns that Leibel is only a poor hodcarrier, while Leibel's wife finds that Selig has brought nothing. Ultimately, they meet at a new building where both are employed.

*Bedomayikh Hayyi* (In Thy Blood Live) is a moving story. Meyer and Goldie and their nine-year-old son, Hayemel, arrive in Israel and adapt themselves to an extent. But Goldie is worried, for Hayemel looks wan and sorrowful. All inquiries as to what ails him are in vain. One day, however, he asks his mother whether he is a Jew, and tells

her that his friends call him *Shegetz* (Gentile). She immediately guesses the reason. Because of their wanderings in Asiatic Russia for years, Hayemel had not been circumcised. She decides to have the operation performed, and though the father, a radical, protests, she has her way. The circumcision over, Hayemel joyfully tells his mother, "Mother, I am a Jew!" She, hearing these words, sees her father and mother in a vision, and hears them murmur the words, "*Bedomayikh Hayyi*" (Ezekiel XVI: 6).

Other stories reveal different phases of the struggle for adjustment. The new settlers in most cases find calm and peace after weary wandering; Perlow's narrative is artful and interesting in content and style.

## 25. ANNIHILATION STORIES

### i. JOSEPH OCRUTNI

Of the numerous works which deal with the annihilation of East European Jewries by the Nazis, the following three describe certain of its phases in a belletristic form. The first is *Das Buch fun die Elente* (The Book of the Forsaken People) by Joseph Ocrutni.

Some of the sketches portray the suffering of persons who use every effort to save themselves from the Nazis, but not all succeed. Others depict the pain and anguish of mothers who, in their hurry to flee, lose their young children and seek them for many years when they return to Poland after the war. One story is about a mother who, after writing letters to various places inquiring after her lost daughter, receives a reply from a child in a children's home in Stavropol, Caucasia, giving her name and birthplace, Bialystok, which correspond with the name and city given in the letter. The child adds that she does not know whether she is Jewish, for her teacher does not tell her, and she has no mother. The mother is sure that the girl is her child, but Stavropol is far, and she has no money and does not know how to get there, and so she keeps on wandering and inquiring.

Other sketches take the form of letters exchanged between various members of several families related to each other, who are scattered in cities in Siberia, Transcaucasia, and in labor camps in northern Russia. They offer tragic pictures of the tribulations and suffering of the lonely forsaken refugee Jews who were transported to these cities by the Russians.

Very moving is the story called *Rumkowsky*, about the rule of the Jew Rumkowsky, appointed by the Germans to take charge of the

ghetto in Lodz, and what is most distressing is that he discharges his task faithfully. Mercilessly, he stands over the workers in the factory and demands greater and greater production for the benefit of his masters. He does not hesitate even to carry out orders by the Germans to take young children from their parents to be destroyed. In vain, the mothers cry and fathers curse; he is unmoved, and during the "ten days of penitence" his Jewish policemen are sent to search the ghetto for children hidden by their parents and to drag them from their hiding places. On the Day of Atonement, Rumkowsky, wrapped in a Talith decorated with gold bands, stands proudly in the synagogue. His willingness to act as the instrument of the Germans to oppress his brethren, and his indifference to their cries and tears is a most heartrending feature of the tragic story.

Ocrutni's narrative is flowing; he shows the various characters in detail of daily living; thus the chief traits of their personalities are seen, all of which heightens the tragedy of their suffering.

## ii. YERACHMIEL BRIKS

The horrors of the concentration camp of Auschwitz before the Jewish inmates were burned in the crematories are told fully and in a masterly manner by Yerachmiel Briks in his book, *Al Kiddush ha-Shem* (For the Sanctification of the Name of God). The portrayal so vividly projects the brutality and sadism of the directors and their underlings as to make it unbelievable that such practices could be carried on by human beings. And what is more horrifying is that Jewish inmates destined with the others for the crematories, but temporarily promoted to positions of guards and caretakers, participated in the tortures.

The tragic drama revolves around a group of Jews who are brought to Auschwitz from the ghetto in Lodz, where for a time there were seventy thousand Jews. To increase the suffering of the deportees, the Nazis deceive them by making them believe they were being taken to Vienna to work in places where plenty of food and many comforts would be provided. While still in the train, they discover the ruse as several young men are shot in the attempt to escape. The real agonies of hell begin on arrival. The inmates suffer hunger and cold, sleep without bedding, and are assigned to the most difficult tasks, and are frequently beaten with rubber truncheons for the slightest transgression. Wives are separated from their husbands and children from their mothers. The children are the first to be sent to the crema-

tories. Only a few women succeed in keeping the children with them. One of them, Deborah Leah, wife of the engineer Hirsh, manages to keep her children.

Yet, even in this world of brutality, torture, blood, and tears, there flash before us from time to time sparks of aroused humanity, and there shine forth deeds of saintliness. When Deborah Leah's younger child begins to cry, one of the women guards starts beating the mother. Thereupon one of the political prisoners, a Pole, who heard the crying, rushes in and strikes the guard with his fists and warns her not to dare strike any woman again. "I know," says he, "that I will pay for this with my life, but the miserable creature," pointing to the guard, will not escape from me."

Deborah Leah, deeply religious, cannot refrain from lighting the Sabbath candles even in the death camp. As candlesticks she uses potatoes, which she procured with much travail, and as candles she used strips of her clothing soaked in margarine. Caught by the guards, she is severely beaten, yet she continues to light the candles. A Bible is found in the barracks and when its owner is sought, no one admitted it for a while, but Deborah Leah whose Bible it was, follows her father's example. He sacrificed his life to save his brethren, and now she declares that the book is hers. She is given fifty strokes with a rubber truncheon and ordered to count the strokes herself. At the twenty-third she faints and is revived. Soon, however, she meets her fate. As her child is taken from her to the crematories, she scratches the eyes of the officers and is immediately shot. The other child, little Rebecca, seven years old, escapes from the group of children consigned to the crematory and hides. Hearing that many children and women are to be burned on the day of *Simhat Torah* (ninth day of Feast of Tabernacles), she gives herself up crying, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One," and, in company with the other children, enters the crematories.

Such is the tale of torture and suffering Briks tells, highlighted by scenes in which human emotion and religious fervor are powerfully drawn.

### iii. MORDECAI STRIGLER

A belletristic work dealing with the same subject, life in the concentration camp, but differing from the former in quality, extent of panorama, and number of incidents is *Gorelot* (Destinies) by Mordecai Strigler. It is a book of seven hundred pages, divided into three

parts, and the scene of action is the Labor Camp Z, situated in Poland near the city of Radom.

The camp and factory connected with it contain thousands of Jews, for the purpose is to have as many Jews as possible work hard in order to manufacture weapons and other articles of war. The general form of administration in concentration camps is established also in Camp Z; food is reduced to a minimum and hunger is the rule, and beatings by the guards and supervisors are frequently administered. From time to time selections are made and a number of people are sent to other camps to be killed. But on the whole, a freer atmosphere prevails in Camp Z. Discipline is not enforced in all its brutality and the inmates enjoy many privileges. They are allowed to bring their baggage and keep it. Many have outside connections and succeed in getting money as well as food from their friends, or even smuggle out valuable articles and sell them. Business transactions are going on all the time.

The actual management of the camp and factory lies practically in Jewish hands. A number of the inmates have found favor with the Germans and have been raised to positions of commandants, of various small officials, and of guards.

Among these favored ones is a large group headed by a woman named Fellah, who has made sure that several members of her family are in important positions, especially her two brothers-in-law, Weissenberg and Feldman.

The large number of Jews in the camp and factory present a variety of persons from all walks of life. Many came from the low stratum of the Jewish population in Poland and their moral character is not very high, yet a number of them have found their place among officials. The head commandant, Fellah, is as much interested in amorous affairs as in discharging her duties. She therefore selects men for various kinds of positions for their appearance rather than for their skill and ability. The moral level of the large group of officials of Camp Z is therefore on the whole low.

Numerous types are seen. One is a man who declares himself to be a Hassidic rabbi from the city of Hilbrome; he is surrounded by a number of Hassidim who treat him as such; even the officials and Fellah treat him with respect. He soon establishes a little synagogue, and during the holidays holds services which are attended by many inmates. There are also professional people—engineers, physicians, and others of higher education, both in the general and Jewish sphere,

and pretty soon a special barracks is set aside for the intellectuals. There is also a convert to Christianity, a man named Stashek, by profession an engineer, whose hatred toward Jews becomes intensified on his entry into the camp, though he must stifle it. Present also is Michele, a former Yeshibah student, well versed in Jewish knowledge, who has become a painter and writer. Michele serves the author as a kind of central figure in the story, for much in it revolves around his doings. The women and girls likewise present a variety of characters, but in all of them there is evident the eternal feminine, the desire for male companionship in one way or another.

Against such a background of a multitude of varied characters, dominated by fear, oppression, and exertion of efforts to keep body and soul together in which all means are permissible—stealing, smuggling, and cheating—the author exhibits an authentic picture of life in camp. It is filled with hundreds of episodes: people being shot for attempting to escape; successful escapes, selection of victims for the crematory; and above all the manifestation of the desire to enjoy life in some degree. As a result, sexual promiscuity, the only available form of enjoyment, breaks out in camp from time to time, but Michele is not caught by that fever and resists many open appeals by women.

When, in the fall of 1944, the Germans decided to break up Camp Z and transport the inmates, panic reigns in the camp and plans to escape are plotted, especially among a large section of the officials headed by Fellah. The author tells of this mass attempt at escaping in detail and we learn that eight hundred succeeded in leaving the camp, but many among them Fellah and her family, were shot by the Polish and Ukrainian guards. Those who remained were freed by the Allies in the spring of 1945, among them Michele.

Strigler displays great skill and artistic ability in unraveling the panorama which, though consisting of hundreds of episodes, is connected with many strands, and the soul-gripping narrative holds our interest. The characters are drawn with sure psychological insight, their leading traits are sharply delineated. We are thus offered not only a glimpse into the life which was going on in the concentration camp, but see its picture in its impact of tragedy and brutality.

#### iv. HAYYIM GRADE

Of the large number of books which depict Jewish life in Poland, most portray the life of the Jews in the ghettos during the first years of the Nazi invasions, and only a few reflect the life immediately be-

fore the Second World War. One of these is a collection of short stories entitled *Der Mame's Shabosim* (The Mother's Sabbaths) by Hayyim Grade, which tells of Jewish life in the Wilna ghetto before the Second World War, as well as during and after it.

The stories, or rather descriptions, are autobiographical, and his mother, a poor widow who sells fruit and vegetables in the poorer section of the Wilna ghetto, and the author, the narrator, are usually the principal characters. The mother's poor dwelling is a room behind a blacksmith shop; the various episodes in her trade, and the way the Sabbaths are celebrated, are described in detail. Likewise, the description of the narrators own experience, his leaving the Yeshibah and turning to literature, and several love affairs are also garnished with many details.

However, more than this is held to view: numerous other characters appear, such as the mother's partners in her trade, neighbors and their children, young friends of the author and their parents, including his future father-in-law, a rabbi in a small Jewish community. And not only are they described, but also all the events in their lives, weddings, funerals, as well as the adventures of the younger members of the families. Thus we see the poverty of the ghetto, the struggle for existence, the rise and fall of fortunes, the rift between the pious parents and the children who stray from the way of tradition and are caught in the net of various radical movements. Especially strong is the lure of communism, dominant in neighboring Russia, which is presented to young boys and girls in a halo of glory offering peace and freedom. Many of the young people cross the border in order to share that life and are never heard of again.

All these events, episodes, and changes are more or less interrelated and are described in a masterly manner with keen character portrayal. The chapter, *Der Tog fun die Bettler* (The Day of the Beggars) is particularly interesting. The first Monday of the month of Nissen, the month of Passover, was the day set in the ghetto for the beggars to come to the market for donations. The chapter portrays in detail the arrival of the many beggars and their negotiations with the donors, their demands for larger sums, the devices they employ to get them, the excuses of the donors, and the insults offered by the beggars when refused. The description reminds one of Mendele's *Book of Snorers*.

This part ends with the defeat of the Russians who controlled Wilna for a time during the beginning of the Second World War,



when a mass flight of Jews from Wilna begins, and among the refugees are the author and his wife, Frume Liftsche, a nurse. She cannot bear all the tribulations of the journey and returns to Wilna to her mother while he continues on his way. The journey is a long one. Joining the refugees, Grade follows the fleeing populace on numerous stops from Wilna to Stalinabad, capital of a Soviet Asiatic republic, and gives us a faithful account of the wanderings and suffering, with characters well-drawn.

Very moving are the last few chapters in which the author tells the story of his visit in Wilna after the war. Day after day, he wanders through the deserted streets of the ghetto, looks at the tenantless houses, the broken-down synagogues, and there, before him, rise the scenes of the Wilna he once knew. He stumbles upon a house on a certain street bearing the number nine, where he meets a Jewish cobbler whom he knew before, who tells him that Frume Liftche, his wife, lived in that house during the war. He searches in vain for some vestiges of his wife in that house, and turns to visit his mother's former abode where he meets a hungry cat, the only living creature. A vision then rises before his eyes of how his mother used to interrupt her prayers on the Day of Atonement and go home to feed her hungry cat. His lips murmur, "mother went back to the synagogue for Neilah and will never come back."

## 26. NOVELS AND STORIES PORTRAYING LIFE IN PRE-WAR POLAND

### i. J. J. SINGER

Among the Yiddish novels which portray Jewish life in Poland of the near past, *Die Brider Ashkenazi*, by J. J. Singer, is outstanding. Its setting is the city of Lodz as it grows from an insignificant Polish village to a great commercial and industrial center in the Russian Empire, and of its weaving industry. On it he draws a grand picture of the role of the Jew in making Lodz what it became, and the center of that picture is the family Ashkenazi, which consists of the father, Abraham Hirsh, the mother and the twin boys, Simḥa Mayer and Jacob Bunin. Abraham Hirsh, head of the Jewish community in Lodz, is a pious Hassid, a scholar devoted to the study of the Talmud, but also devoted to business enterprises. His keen eyes, which have probed deeply into the mysteries of the Talmud, also observe that it would be more profitable for the owners of the two largest cloth factories in Lodz, Heinz Huntze and Fritz Goetzke, to join in partnership

rather than compete, and for arranging that partnership he is appointed general agent of the firm, which brings him riches and honor.

Simḥa Mayer and Jacob Bunin differ from each other, both physically and spiritually. Simḥa Mayer is short, lean and plain-looking, and morose, but excels in studies and is considered a prodigy, while Jacob Bunin is tall, handsome and lively, but a poor student. As a result of these contrasts, no love is lost between the brothers, and each one follows a different course in life. Simḥa Mayer, conscious of his physical inferiority and mental superiority, decides that he will make his way in the world by the prowess of his mind, and by energy and effort conquer all obstacles by whatever means at hand, so that the name Simḥa Mayer Ashkenazi will become outstanding, while Jacob Bunin drifts along in life, but is successful more by accident than intention.

Simḥa Mayer is the villain of the story, and the greater part of his life is a tale of grasping and ruthless behavior, in his ambition to become the king of Lodz's weaving industry. His first step in pursuing that ambition is his manipulation to obtain control of the factory belonging to his father-in-law, Chaim Alter, who, after he married off his daughter Dinah to this young prodigy, finds himself on the verge of bankruptcy. He approaches Simḥa Mayer for the loan of the dowry he gave him. After much bickering he lends him the money in exchange for a third interest in the factory. The simple Chaim allows his son-in-law to assume control after borrowing from him money on notes until the sum amounts to the value of the entire factory. Having a keen sense of business, Simḥa Mayer enlarges the factory, increases production, and grows rich. His married life is marked by unhappiness, for Dinah did not want to marry him, but submitted only to the will of her parents. She really hates him, while he loves her and resents her coldness, yet this forms no obstacle in making the second step in pursuit of his ambition.

He ingratiates himself with the sons of Huntze by extending to them a loan, and as a reward they advise their father to install Simḥa Mayer in place of his father, Abraham Hirsh, as general agent of the firm. Gradually he becomes the director of the firm when old Huntze dies and the sons hating Lodz and the business as well, prefer to live in Paris.

While Simḥa Mayer, now calling himself Max, labors hard to attain riches and power, Jacob attains them without labor. He marries the daughter of the richest Jew in Warsaw, who fell in love with him

at first sight. He also inherits fifty-thousand rubles from his father, whereas Max has been disinherited, and in addition becomes the general agent of Mr. Flederbaum, owner of a large weaving factory occupying an office opposite Max's. This aggravates Max's hatred of his brother and strengthens his ambition to become richer, more powerful, and he is ruthless. When the labor movement, led by Nissan Eyebchutz, the son of Max's former teacher and his schoolmate, threatens the interests of the factory owners, Max informs the police of its spread and the activities of its leaders. Nissan is arrested and the strikers are attacked. Max does not hesitate to sacrifice on the altar of his ambition even his family life. Planning to own the large Huntze factory, and needing a large sum of money which he could obtain only by marrying a rich elderly widow, he sues for divorce. His wife with the help of Jacob contests the divorce in vain. Max has his way, and also gets the factory. He moves into Huntze's palace, thus realizing his ambition to be king of the weaving industry.

Then the war breaks out; the Germans occupy Lodz and dismantle the factories, sending all the machinery to Germany. Max, however, goes to Petrograd, establishes a factory there, obtains government contracts and continues to amass riches. He is deaf and blind to the signs of the times, the rise of the masses, the demands of the workers. The desire for power has taken complete possession of him. However, his success in new territory is brief; revolution breaks out and not only is his factory confiscated, but he is arrested. He is saved by his brother, who by odd circumstances is also his son-in-law. After Jacob's wife divorced him, Max's daughter fell in love with her uncle and forced herself upon him. Jacob, returning to Lodz and not finding Max, goes to Petrograd and, knowing the ways of the world and the value of the key which opens all doors, frees him and takes him to the border of Poland. A Jew-hating gendarme demands that they dance before him and curse the Jews. Max obeys, but Jacob approaches the officer, slaps his face, and in turn is shot. Thus Max who strove for dominance and power, debased himself to save his life, while Jacob who pursued only joy and pleasure in life, honored it by his death. Max makes one more attempt at opening the factory after the war during the time of the short-lived Polish Republic, but the inflation makes an end of it, and following the closing of the factory Max Ashkenazi dies.

It is a complicated narrative. Numerous characters appear, with other Jewish and Gentile industrialists taking part in the drama.

Scenes of the German occupation, of life in prison, of the revolution, and especially of the labor movement with its strikes and demonstrations, are all masterfully described. The author displays great understanding of human character and conduct and presents them lucidly. The novel was translated into English and was highly praised by critics who have assigned it to permanence and endurance. However, from the point of view of Jewish literature, there is something missing, the genuine Jewish spirit. Almost all the Jewish characters are spiritually negative. The only idealists are in the ranks of the workers, Nissan, Tevia the weaver, and his daughter, Bashke, shot during a demonstration. Is it possible that in the large community of Lodz with its many Jewish industrialists and leading merchants there was not one to display a fine Jewish spirit and a better reaction to the events of the time? The only relieving feature is the death of Jacob Bunin. Max Ashkenazi's character is all black. Throughout his whole life there is not a moment of remorse at the suffering he caused to many people, including his own wife whom he loved. Even in his last days, on his return to Lodz, he still keeps thinking of his ambition. It may be a great novel, but not a Jewish novel.

## ii. ISAAC MATZKER

Isaac Matzker's novel, *In Zeiden's Felder* (In Grandfather's Fields), reflects Jewish life in Poland in an earlier epoch, the time before the First World War. Though the scene of action is laid in Eastern Galicia near the Russian border, which at the time belonged to Austria, the manner of life was the same as in Poland, from which it was torn at the division of that kingdom at the end of the eighteenth century. However, the life portrayed in the novel possesses a special aspect, for it is the life of a Jewish family who, early in the 1880's in addition to innkeeping and liquor distilling and selling, became landowners and engaged in agriculture in the village of Janowitz.

It is a many-branched family, for the sons and daughters have established their own households and ultimately their children have followed suit. The founder of the family is Baer Dorfman, but the family in time becomes known among the Jews of Janowitz and of neighboring villages as the family of Leiben und Behren (Lions and Bears), for many of its members are named Leib and Baer. Gradually the various members of the family strike root among the Polish and Ruthenian peasants and become prosperous.

The novel, which revolves around the vicissitudes of the family, is

in reality a series of stories recounting episodes and changes in the lives of the various members, as well as of their children and grandchildren. There are many characters, but only one can be considered a leading one. The story opens with the marriage, in the year 1882, of Leib, grandson of Baer, to his cousin Riva, and then the skein of events and episodes begins to unwind. The period covered extends over thirty-six years, ending with the conclusion of the First World War, and its incidents reflect not only the life of the family, but also conditions in neighboring Jewish settlements, as well as the changes in life in general.

We note first the increase of the Jewish population in that section, for many Jews from across the Russian border settled here after escaping from the pogroms. The increase arouses an effort on the part of Baer and others to make the life of the group more typically Jewish. First, Baer establishes a small synagogue. As time goes on and more Jews come, a shohet, or ritual slaughterer, is brought into the village. Joseph, another grandson of Baer, who became rich and a large landowner, imports a teacher for his children and a small Hebrew school is established. Thus there continues the struggle to maintain Jewishness.

On the other hand, we note the reverse of the medal. The young people raised in the village among the Poles and Ruthenians, influenced by the environment, join in the parties of the Gentile boys and girls, and some of the younger Jews are involved in clandestine love affairs with Gentiles, which though they do not end in intermarriage, yet weaken their interest in Jewish life.

Soon the relations between the Jews and their neighbors begin to change. The echo of the pogroms and revolutionary movements across the border in Russia in the year 1905 reverberates also in the Galician area. Peasants begin to demand more land and look askance at Jewish holdings, and they even burn down the mansion of a Jewish landowner. As a result, the fortunes of the family begin to totter. A member of the family leaves for America and is soon followed by several relatives. However, for a time the situation continues without great changes. Then the war breaks out; the Russians arrive in Galicia, plunder, burn houses, and attacks upon Jews follow. Many Jews hide and a number leave for America, including several other members of Leib's family. When the war is over and a Ukranian government is established for a time, the Jewish situation becomes worse;

a new wave of migration takes place including more members of the family.

In all these vicissitudes and changes, Leib remains rooted in the land, and refuses all appeals to leave the country or even the house of his grandfather which he inherited. Like a mighty oak, he weathers all storms and remains in his place. And when his house is deserted by his children and grandchildren, he continues to till the soil. The narrative runs smoothly, and the author succeeds in connecting the many events and episodes in a logical way, and thus presents a many-faceted and colorful picture of a segment of Jewish life of times gone by.

### iii. ELHANAN ZEITLIN

Elhanan Zeitlin, the son of the famous mystic and philosopher Hillel Zeitlin, presents in his book, *In a Literarische Stub* (In a Literary House), a portrayal, or rather a series of portrayals, of an interesting aspect of prewar Jewish life in Poland, the life of the intellectuals and writers. The book contains sketches of visits of novelists, short-story writers, poets, and essayists in his father's house. The discussions record the conferences held by the visiting literati as well as their criticisms of each other's works, and even their quarrels, all of which took place in that house over many years. The meeting place was changed during the summer from the apartment in Warsaw to a place in Atwozk, famous summer resort, where new visitors made their appearance. The group of visitors was large and included a number of the outstanding men in both Hebrew and Yiddish literatures, such as Peretz, Bialik, David Frishman, Shalom Aleichem, and others, as well as leaders of Jewish movements.

The sketches, though brief, throw light on many facets of the prewar Jewish literary world. We often see in them the smallness of the personalities of otherwise great writers or poets. We get a glimpse into the intricate relations between publishers and writers, of the keen competition between the several Yiddish dailies which appeared in Warsaw at the time, and of the state of affairs in the editorial office of the only Hebrew journal, the daily *ha-Zeman*. At times, we enjoy the witty remarks made at the meetings and discussions, of which the following is an illustration. J. L. Peretz, whose stories and dramas glorify Hassidism, mysticism, and saintliness, but whose personal life was far from religious, was once told by Hillel Zeitlin,

"Peretz, you reach heaven in your stories, but God is not there." The panorama thus revealed is not large in extent but possesses depth.

#### iv. BARUCH HAGGER

Another segment of Jewish life of the past is revealed in Baruch Hagger's book, *Malkut Hassidut* (The Kingdom of Hassidism), though it does not portray the daily Hassidic life in the synagogue, or in business, or in the family. Some stories deal mainly with the view of Hassidic rabbis of the way man can come near to God, or the degree of warmth of heart and soul with which man is to utter his prayers. One story tells of a certain rabbi who, though very frugal in the conduct of his home, is lavish in charity, and once even gave a large sum to a Mithnaged to help him raise a dowry for his daughter. Another story, on the other hand, tells of the greed of a rabbi, Motele from Tchernobol, in demanding larger and costlier gifts when the Hassidim present their slips asking for blessings. There are also stories of quarrels between Hassidim and their opponents, or victories of Hassidic rabbis over leading scholars, opponents of Hassidism, on questions of Jewish law. Altogether, they offer a glimpse of Jewish ways of the past.

## CHAPTER V

### YIDDISH POETRY, ESSAYS, AND CRITICISM

#### 27. INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The latter period is as rich in poetic production as the preceding one. Numerous poetic works have been published, and as in the previous period, Yiddish literature possesses more distinction in its prose writings than in its poetry. Nor has this period brought forth bards who can compare with some of the outstanding earlier poets. To a large degree, the songs and poems of the old singers are still superior in the production of the Yiddish muse. There is, though, because of the many vicissitudes of Jewish life in the span of time discussed, a change in motifs employed by the poets. The effects of the great catastrophe and the rise of the State of Israel are the leading subject matter in most of the poems. These have brought about a change in the general character of poetic production. While the poetry of the preceding period was, on the whole, almost entirely secular, there is a marked religious note in the poetry of the present period, especially in those poems in which the catastrophe is dominant. That a number of singers will follow the old way, goes without saying.

#### 28. YIDDISH POETRY

##### i. A. SUTZKOVER

Among the poetic works in which the catastrophe and the rise of the State of Israel are used by the author, is the collection of poems, *In Midbar Sinai* (In the Desert of Sinai), by A. Sutzkover. He sings of the glory of the mountain where God's revelation was enacted thousands of years ago. Overcome with emotion at the sight of that mountain, which he probably passed on the march as a member of the Jewish army, he exclaims in his opening song, "O God, how worthy am I that I, a refugee from the land of exile,



shall come to the place where long ago the sound of the words, 'I am thy God,' reverberates in the atmosphere of the astonished world."

In another poem, he says, "O God, the roles have changed. Thou breathest in dry bones a spirit of life, but with Thy children, a living child and its mother burned to ashes." He adds mournfully, "Yet Thy commandments are being engraved with flaming fingers, not on stone tablets but on leaves of books by the skeletons of the ghettos and the camp of Treblinka." Of modern Jerusalem he sings, "Here there breathe the stone walls, there breathe the dead. It is not a city, but a sleeping giant which is now being awakened."

Soul-grIPPING is a poem called *Smoke of Jewish Children*, in which the ghetto after a massacre is described as follows: "No children, only smoke, smoke rises, fluttering smoke. The dead children, living smoke. They call mama, mama; the dolls, the toys are smoke. The dead children play in the smoke." Thus, tears for the life that is gone, and awakening hope for a new life mingle in Sutzkover's poems

## ii. HAYYIM GRADE

Sorrow and anguish pour forth from the aching heart of one who himself went through the terrors of the catastrophe, and whose love for the life and tradition of those who died form a part of his personality and the very essence of the collection of poems, *Shein fun Ferloshene Stern* (The Luster of Extinguished Stars), by Hayyim Grade. The very title differentiates these poems from others of similar theme. This becomes, however, clearer in the first stanza of the poem which introduces the series called *Jewish Towns of Poland*. It reads, "Jewish Towns of Poland, did you consist only of straw and moss so that the wind could carry you away without leaving a vestige? My poor Sabbath, my sainted inspired weekdays, have you not left an heir, and only the church bells will recite the Kaddish for you?" Grade then undertakes to recite one long Kaddish in his poems and elegies. The Kaddish is not primarily for the martyred Jewish dead, but mainly for their saintly life, their piety, and moral conduct.

To these he devotes his poems in which he shows in moving descriptions various sidelights of the personality of these Jews and their fate. Thus he wails, "Dreaming fathers, your long-stranded beards and the locks of your curly *peoth* hang now on the crooked willows on Polish soil, as formerly the harps of the Levites hung

on the shores of the rivers of Babylon, silent and rusted."

There are some fine stanzas about the life of his young friends, their dreams, the ideals they strived for, and the movements they participated in. They end with an anguished cry, "And now you lie together, dead in the fields of Poland, covered by snow and soaked by rain." In other poems we hear a heartrending cry at the sight of destruction of the Jewish communities in such cities as Lublin, Kelz, and Krakau. In the first, visions of the great scholars, saints, and mystics who lived in Lublin rise before him. There pass in procession Solomon Lurie, known as Marshal; Meyer Lublin, known as Mahram, whose commentaries lighted the way of generations of students in the study of the Talmud; these are followed by Hassidic rabbis led by the Lublin seer, ending with Rabbi Meyer Shapiro, last rabbi of that city. Says the poet, "Look, ye rabbis and saints, groups of Jews follow each other in rows, but their way does not lead to the synagogue and the klausen, but to Maidenek where crematories glow." The second poem dwells on the massacre of the Jews in Kelz and the brutal indifference of the Polish neighbors, who look with hidden joy at the long rows of funerals. In the third poem, the bard, spending the Day of Atonement in Krakau, bemoans the emptiness of the large synagogues on the Day of Atonement, including the one in which Rabbi Moses Isserlis, the codifier, had worshiped, and the weekday atmosphere which reigns on that Day of Judgment, for says the poet, "The worshipers had months of judgment."

From time to time, a rebellious cry against God for allowing such torture and suffering to His beloved children breaks forth in Grade's poems and elegies. In one poem, a satiric tragedy, the poet brings down the prophet Ezekiel into the concentration camp of Auschwitz to try to resurrect the dry bones, for he had performed such an act before. He searches and searches for the bones, but in vain; the flames have left no bones. There are only heaps of iron and copper, remnants of vessels used by those who were consumed. Ironically he calls to the prophet, "Son of man, (the name by which Ezekiel was called by God), can you resurrect these heaps?"

Thus the poet recites his Kaddish for the millions of pious and saintly Jews of Poland, whose life and traditions are to him, as he expresses it, like a Talith of many strands, each shining with a special luster of good deeds, study, and moral conduct.

### iii. HIRSH GLICK

Hirsh Glick, poet of the ghetto and partisan (1920-43), was

born and bred in Wilna. He joined the partisans who fought the Germans, but was caught by the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp in Estonia, from which he escaped in the fall of 1943, and was killed in an attack against a German group. Though he wrote a number of poems, his fame rests on the one called *Sog Noch Kein Mal* (Never Say Again). It became the song of the partisans and of the ghetto, and it is sung now at folk gatherings and meetings. It has been translated into Hebrew, English, Dutch, and Spanish. We give here the English version:

Never say there is only death for you,  
Though leaden skies may be concealing days of blue,  
Because the hour that we hungered for is near  
Beneath our tread the earth shall rumble, we are here.

From land of palm trees to the far end of snow  
We shall be coming with our torment and woe;  
And everywhere our blood has sunk into the earth  
Shall our bravery, our vigor blossom forth.

We will have the morning sun to set our day aglow,  
And all our yesterdays shall vanish with the foe.  
And if the time is long before the sun appears,  
Then let this song go like a signal through the years.

This song was written with blood and not with lead:

It is not a song that birds sing overhead,  
It was a people among the toppling barricades  
That sang this song of ours with pistols and grenades.  
So never say that there is only death for you.

Leaden skies may be concealing days of blue,  
Yet the hour we hungered for is near.  
Beneath our tread the earth shall tremble, we are here.

It is a song which breathes with strength, courage, and hope for a better future, no matter how dark the present may be. This hope has its source in the life and destiny of a people which, in spite of millennial tribulation and suffering, never ceased to believe that a better day will come, and have thus survived.

#### iv. EPHRAIM AUERBACH

Ephraim Auerbach sings with glee in his small collection of songs, *Die Weisse Stadt* (The White City), of the way in which

the Day of Independence (Yom ha-Atzmauth) was celebrated in Tel-Aviv. It consists of one long poem composed of twenty songs, each of which portrays a spark of the joy fluttering in the white city of Tel-Aviv.

Some songs depict the beauty of nature as it appears to the poet on that day, the blueness of the sky, the light clouds floating in it, the majestic trees on Rothchild Boulevard, and the multi-colored flowers at their feet. Others sing of the joy in the streets manifested in the cheerful good morning with which the Jews greet each other. The Jews differ in type, language, and way of life, Bulgarians, Iraquis, Moroccans; but today all differences disappear, all are wrapped in a halo of joy at the freedom they attained. Still other songs echo the gladness of the sabras, the generation which wrote many leaves in the new chapter of Jewish history, celebrating the day with song and dance in the streets.

From Tel-Aviv, the poet turns his glance to Jaffa where groups of older Jews hailing from Poland and other lands of Eastern Europe, who escaped from fire and sword, celebrate the day with songs in Yiddish. This celebration in Jaffa appears to our poet as an exotic wedding festival, where the bride—the escaped Jews—brings to the groom—the land—a dowry in the form of Talethim spotted with blood, in the hope that the sorrow in their heart will disappear and joy will take its place. Auerbach continues to present in song after song scenes which took place on this day of celebration in which young and old participated.

#### V. AARON GLANZ

Aaron Glanz (Leiles), a prolific Yiddish poet, has to his credit a number of poetic works, including several dramatic poems, in which his muse displays much variety, especially in his last collection of songs and poems, *Bein Fuss fun Barg* (At the Foot of the Mountain). Many are the subjects he sings about, but, on the whole, he can be characterized as a poet of human life. It is the multi-phased life of man which attracts him most. His portrayals of nature possess beauty: however, it is not nature per se which he sings of, but nature as it influences the life of man. In such poems, when he notes the restfulness of nature and its quiet beauty, his heart is permeated with the joy of life, as he says in his poem, *Yom Tob*, "When I absorb the Sabbath song of nature, I feel as if a great eyeful of light is looking at me." In another poem, the same beauty arouses in him

a feeling of kindness toward every living being, and a will to live in spite of his sad experiences. But at other times, looking upon scenes he visited many times before and finding in them the same beauty, he begins to think of the consistency of nature on the one hand, and the continual change in man's life on the other, and his joy is mixed with sorrow.

Glanz possesses a special talent for bringing out the poetic appeal in ordinary events and episodes. A grandfather and a grandson look at each other, they smile at each other, and love fills the grandfather's heart, but the poet calls forth in the grandfather's heart a thought which seems to say, "How long is it since I smiled and prattled as he, and how long will it be when his smile will change into an artificial one caused by necessity?" The grandfather shudders at the thought, but the child prattles on. In another poem, *Mentchen* (Men), he contrasts the two-phased relation which man has toward his fellow man. He loves to be in the company of men; he feels exalted and his personality broadens and embraces them all, but he also fears them. Frequently, even the nearest friend becomes like a smooth wall into which one finds no entry, for the depths of human personality are sealed. It is a simple truth, but requires the eye of a poet for revelation.

In another short poem, he depicts a Seder in his father's house at which he asks the *Kashes*, a frequent experience in the life of every Jew, but the portrayal is endowed with much beauty and deep sorrow for the irretrievable youth.

The work contains a number of Biblical poems, of which one, *Bein Fuss fun Barg*, is very moving. It sings of Moses' prayer to God to forgive His people for their sins in making a golden calf. The poet is permeated with the deepest sense of mercy by having Moses plead to God to include Moses if He wishes to destroy His people. The poet who does not seem to be on good terms with God, for in a number of songs he complains bitterly against His conduct, has God moved by Moses' sense of mercy.

In a cycle of twelve short poems about Elijah, each one flashing a streak of the light of his soul before us. There is one which reveals the very depth of a mother's feeling. Elijah asks a mother why she is crying. She points to the cold body of her son. "Your son is dead," says the prophet, "let him rest in peace, life is full of suffering. I myself prayed many times for death." And the mother answers, "Holy prophet, you are divinely exalted, but you are not

a mother''; and the poet adds, Elijah is silent for a while but complies with the mother's request to resurrect the son. It is a fine addition to the story told in the First Book of Kings XVII:22. A number of poems dedicated to the memory of the leading American Yiddish poets reveal with deep feeling their personalities and the essence of their muse.

On the whole, the collection is completely secular, and occasionally even displays a rebellious attitude toward God, nor is the great Jewish tragedy, as well as the joy at the rise of the Jewish State represented much in the collection. Only one poem is dedicated to the Jewish State and two to the catastrophe. There is, however, inspiration and poetic flight in most of the poems selected.

#### vi. JACOB GLATSTEIN

Jacob Glatstein, one of the prolific Yiddish poets, collected his numerous poems, scattered in many periodicals, into one volume called *Mein Ganzen Mieh* (All My Labor). The muse of Glatstein is many-phased, for the themes he sings about are numerous and all of them are permeated with a genuine Jewish spirit, saturated with love for his people, with longing for the distinct Jewish life which prevailed in Poland where he was raised, and with joy in the birth of the Jewish State.

That he was moved by the loss of millions of his brethren whom he calls *Stralendige Yidden* (Luminous Jews) whose piety and goodness illumined not only their own souls, but also the souls of those who came in contact with them, need not be said. His cry over the fate of these Jews is heard in many a poem. In one of them he sees smoke ascending from the chimney of the crematory; it circles and rises, circles and rises straight to the throne of God; the smoke of a burned body of a Jew followed by the smoke of the bodies of his wife and child. There, says the poet, they, the consumed holy souls cry, "God, Thou dwellest in heaven, but not on earth; we too are not there any more." In another poem he calls to God, "Sanctify the world; spread therein the ashes of burned Jewish cities, saturate it with the spirit of a restful Sabbath and fill it with the aroma of a well-prepared and joyously observed Jewish Holy Day."

In a number of poems he expresses his delight at the birth of the State of Israel. With his poetic eye he sees a vision of a land "where justice will reign; there will arise no prophets to chastise the people, for they will have no faults to find, for good will be shared by all.

Only poets will sing there." In another poem he calls to God, "Thou wast a God of our people, why didst Thou forsake Thy *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and become God of the world, a world of strife and steel. Come back to Thy small people and its peaceful Mishkan."

The long narrative poem, *The Bratzlawer Speaks to His Scribe*, is a monologue, in which the sainted Rabbi Nahman expresses his view of the world and life. He says, "There is much joy in the world. All things in nature are happy that they were created and thank God for their existence; the water of the brooks, the trees, the birds call to me, 'Nahman, pronounce a benediction and thank God'." "As for life," says he, Jews search for *Tachlit*, a beneficial end, but Nahman searches for his "self," that he be a "plain Jew but possess a soft heart." He further says, "I plead to God to give me the power of sight to perceive the tribulations of the Jews and suffer with them. That will be my reward, my *Olam ha-Ba*." The poem presents a portrayal of an ideal Jewish saint.

Glatstein, who longs for the Jewish atmosphere of his childhood, is not satisfied with the type of Judaism practiced in this country, and he devotes a number of short poems to its satirization. In one of them, he depicts a scene which takes place in a suburb on a Sunday morning; Jews performing their service on the day of rest, washing their automobiles. Their neighbors solemnly going to church pass them by, wondering at their work. The Jews comfort themselves that the Day of Atonement is coming, and they too will attend services at the synagogue. Meanwhile, they put a touch of piety in their service by calculating the sum which last night's pinochle game, played for the benefit of charity, brought in.

These are some of the themes which Glatstein sings about in fine poetic style and with deep feeling, and, at times, with biting satire.

## 29. ESSAYS AND CRITICISM

### i. HAYYIM GREENBERG

Of the many Yiddish works consisting of collections of essays, most deal primarily with literary criticism, and only a few discuss aspects of Jewish life and thought, as well as their relation to, and their influence on the life and thought of the world in general. Of these the collection of essays, *Yid und Welt* (The Jew and the World) by Hayyim Greenberg can be considered the most distinguished.

Several essays question the existence of racial superiority, and if

the belief of the Jews in being an elected people is justified. In the first essay on that subject, he shows with much historical and literary knowledge that there was hardly a people which did not consider itself superior to all other peoples. We must therefore conclude that if all peoples claim superiority, there is really no superiority at all, for none has proved its claim scientifically or rationally. The same can be said of the Jewish belief of election, and he asserts that this belief has real validity only on traditional religious grounds based on the Torah. Secular Jews cannot validate it.

In the second essay entitled *Behirah and Bekorah* (Election and Primacy), the question of Jewish election takes on a different aspect. There is a foundation for that belief, but on different grounds. It has nothing to do with racial superiority. The author proves with numerous quotations from the entire Jewish literature that Judaism emphasizes the fundamental equality of all men by its very theory of creation of one man, and the rights of the proselyte is as valid as that of any Jew. There are even views that the proselyte should be respected more than the Jew by birth because he accepted the teachings of Judaism voluntarily. Universality is the very basis of Judaism, and genealogical descent never played a role in Judaism, for even King David's descent is traced to a Moabite woman. Similarly, many leading sages, such as Rabbi Akiba and his disciple, Rabbi Meir, were legendarily endowed with distant non-Jewish ancestors. The Jews, however, have the right to claim primacy in enunciating monotheism and evolving the highest type of morality, both of which constitute the most important contribution to civilization.

While this essay was mainly written in answer to attacks on the Jews by some Protestant theologians for their belief in election, it is indirectly aimed also against some Jews who began to expurgate the benediction of "Thou hast selected us from all other nations" from the prayer book. He says there is no reason for such expurgation, for the selection is there even if it came through our own efforts for spiritual ascent. In fact, the Talmud says that God offered the Torah to other people, but they rejected it.

His essay, *Moshe Rabénu fun der Ganzer Welt* (Moses, Our Teacher of the Whole World) is written in the same spirit. In this essay he ridicules Freud who went to the trouble to discover that Moses was an Egyptian by descent. "What difference does it make," says he, "if he had no people to accept his teachings, what influence would he have? He would never be a *Rabénu*, i.e. a teacher not only



of the Jews, but practically of the world." It is the Jews whom Moses taught, and it is they who made him what he became.

Of value is his short essay, *Shabbat*, where he quotes an old Midrash that on the seventh day God created Shabbat itself, namely he endowed it with its special quality. He asserts that the day has initiated not merely a social reform, as many think, but a metaphysical revolution, for its sacredness restrains the power of materialism and enables man to rise spiritually. However fine and exalting as his statements are, there is no indication in the essay as to how a modern Jew should conduct himself on that day in order to realize its purpose.

The same indefiniteness in regard to the practical form of Jewish spirituality or religiosity is evident in two other essays, *Halakah and Agada* and *Identium, Emunah, und Mitzwot Masiot* (Jewry, Belief and Practical Precepts). The first is based on an essay of the same name by Bialik in which the poet demands a definite form of Jewish life, not being satisfied with fine phraseology about Jewishness to which the old term Agada, can be applied. Greenberg utilizes this thesis to point out the difference between Judaism and Christianity. The latter emphasizes belief at the expense of practice, while Judaism, on the other hand, emphasizes action. In the other essay, though, he turns around and claims that Agada, which he interprets as vision or religious inspiration, preceded Halakah. In fact, it is its very foundation. He does not minimize the need of a definite way of life, but demands religious vision. Zionist as he was, he did not believe that mere striving for continuity of existence can serve a people in dispersion as a bond of unity without Agada on which a new Halakah can be built. He wants a religious revival, a kind of new Hassidism. These essays were written before the establishment of the State of Israel. But even in his last essay, *A Blick in der Zukunft* (A Glance into the Future), written in 1951, in which he surveys present Jewish life in this country and attempts to look at its future, he deplores the secularity of Jewish life in Israel, and concludes that he cannot see a vital type of existence of the Jewish group in this country, unless it will possess a stimulating religious content. He cries for a religious revival, for he is dissatisfied with the three forms of Judaism as practiced in this country, but he fails, as many another thinker, to offer even a glimpse at the type of this revival.

There are other essays in the collection on Jewish and general subjects, such as *Martin Luther* and *Nietzsche's Opposition to Judaism* (in which, however, he removes from Nietzsche any taint of anti-Semitism). These essays prove the high value of the book.

It contains much knowledge, philosophic thoughts, and warmth of feeling for Judaism and its teaching.

ii. B. BIALOSTOZKI

A collection of literary essays displaying depth of understanding in terms of the literature they deal with is *Halom und Wohr* (Dream and Reality) by B. Bialostozki. The essays are not critical, but primarily interpretative. They are divided into a number of sections and embrace almost the entire range of American Yiddish literature during three quarters of a century.

The first section, which is the largest and is in reality a monograph, is called *Die Gestalt fun Oriman in Yiddisben Lid* (The Image of the Poor Man as Reflected in Yiddish Poetry). The subject of the title, however, needs explanation. The term, *Oriman*, usually translated as poor man, says the essayist, has in Yiddish, as well as in English, a number of connotations. First of all, it connotes the man who is in need of financial help or charity, and as such, it is associated with the feeling of mercy, and also brings to mind the dispenser of charity and the virtue he practices. Secondly, the term is also applied in Yiddish to any man who undergoes suffering of any kind, whether sickness, oppression, or hard labor, or in general, the lowly man. It corresponds to the Hebrew term, *Ani*, used in the Bible in this connotation, especially in the Book of Psalms. Lastly, it may also be applied to the man who accepts poverty voluntarily, who shuns the good of the world because of great piety. In the legendary part of Jewish literature, thirty-six unknown *Zaddikim*, known in Yiddish as *Lamed Wavnikes*, embrace the life of poverty, engaging in all kinds of hard work. The very Messiah is referred to in the Bible as "lowly and riding on an ass" (Zechariah IX:9). In the Talmud it is told that he sits at a gate in Rome in the company of the poor and the sick. Likewise, the prophet Elijah, of whom Jewish legend speaks in terms of missions to help the needy, is frequently portrayed as a poor man or as a beggar. As a result of this, the term poor is associated with the Messiah, the redeemer, and with Elijah in his traditional role as the announcer of the coming of the Messiah. Also the Besht, founder of Hassidism, was in his younger days a poor digger of clay and often kept company with the poor and the beggars.

Bialostozki undertook to trace the use, in the entire Yiddish poetry, of the *Oriman* in all these phases and its association with the concepts referred to, as motifs in songs and poems. As Yiddish is primarily a folk language in use by the great masses of our people,

and poverty in its various forms was a frequent guest in the ghettos of Eastern Europe, and in earlier days even in the "ghettos" of the United States, it follows that the number of songs and poems in which these motifs and their association are employed is very large. Bialostozki quotes parts of a considerable number of poems in which the term *Oriman* is employed in different ways, as beggars, or as the lowly man, or as the oppressed and suffering.

In the early days of Yiddish poetry when the *Song of the Worker* (The Arbeiter Lid) was in vogue, almost every poet sang of his heavy burden. In later times, when a note of mysticism crept into Yiddish poetry, songs about the poverty of the Besht or about the secret Zaddikim became subjects of poetry. Even the Messiah, and especially Elijah as the friend of the poor, played a great role as motifs in that poetry. Manye Leib, a distinguished American Yiddish poet, wrote sixteen ballads about Elijah and his missions. Later, even the tramps of the Bowery and the negroes entered Yiddish poetry. Bialostozki accompanies his long quotations and poems with discussions about the poets, and as a result, the essay presents a cross section of the Yiddish poetry of the period.

The second section is devoted to a detailed analysis of the poetry of Leib Halperin, A. Liesin and J. L. Peretz. In the essays on each of these three, he points out the leading traits of their poetry and the various stages in their creativity. In the case of Liesin he distinguishes two periods in his poetry, the socialistic and the nationalistic, and emphasizes especially the many-phased motif of the struggle between light and darkness which occupies an important place in his poetic production.

The other three sections contains essays on a number of other poets as well as on several prose writers, and also portraits of well known literary figures in American Yiddish literature, such as Abraham Cahan, Hayyim Zhitlowski, Nahman Sirkin, and others. Taking the books as a whole, it can be said that the series of essays practically presents a short history of American Yiddish literature, especially of its poetic part, written with deep love for its creators.

### iii. MENAHEM BARAISHA

The collection of essays called *Essayen* by Menahem Baraisha, is less weighty than the preceding one, but they throw light on important problems in Jewish life, such as the state of Jewishness of the young generation and the future relation of the Diaspora to the State of Israel.

The essays are short and deal with a number of subjects. The general trend is to survey the Jewishness of the present generation. On the whole, the writer finds it unsatisfactory. A large number of Jews, consciously or unconsciously, are indifferent to Judaism, but even those who are interested in Jewish affairs express interest in a very superficial manner. Even the conferences and banquets held for Jewish causes bear no real Jewish character. Non-Jews are sought as speakers, and even the Jewish speakers endeavor to entertain the audience with their wit rather than education.

In other essays, Baraisha searches for a way to improve the situation by deeper interest in Jewish affairs among the Jews of this country. He is quite aware that the secular type of Jewishness advocated by Yiddish writers and the attempts to introduce it in life by the Jewish Socialist organizations are a failure. He echoes the confession of a friend who was dedicated to this purpose, that it has little to offer. The literature and the Yiddish taught in the schools cannot serve as instruments of survival. There is a need for belief and for tradition. But the essayist says that he cannot find that belief in the synagogue, and certainly not in the Temple, as the religion practiced there is too mechanical. He wants inspiration. He therefore declares in one of his essays that the present generation waits for a new word, or rather a new spiritual concept, to inspire it, but he does not know what it is.

In yet another essay, he asserts that the cause of the continued existence of the Jews in the millennial exile was the belief in their election as a people different than all others. He interprets the reason for this belief to be the possession by the Jews of a particular truth and world view, for the maintenance of which they struggle. He believes, though, that at present there is a need for another type of belief in election which will maintain the integrity of the Jews in the Diaspora, and which will also contain a particular form of truth and a world view different from all other peoples. And again we are not told what it is or will be. Thus, after deploring the loss of Jewish tradition and its strong belief in a definite religious election, acknowledging the failure of secular Jewishness, and evincing a strong desire to maintain Jewish integrity, fear of once more approaching the God of Israel still reigns in the hearts of certain Yiddish intellectuals. It is difficult to decide whether it is mere confusion or self-deception.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANGLO-JEWISH LITERATURE

#### 30. *INTRODUCTORY REMARKS*

In the preceding volume, Anglo-Jewish literature formed a part of a larger chapter on Jewish literature in European languages, for English was only one of the languages in which such literature was produced. It is unnecessary to say that a great change has entered in this matter during the last twenty-five years, since the catastrophe. Hardly any Jewish literature, especially in the field of belles-lettres, was produced in any other European language besides English during this span of time. And since English is the language of several countries, we thought it best to place the treatment of that literature as a part of the world Jewish literature and not include it in the chapters on American Jewish literature, though the works of American writers form the bulk of this chapter.

As for the paucity of selections, notwithstanding the fact that a large number of novels and short stories were written during this period in which Jewish characters are portrayed, the author finds it necessary to explain that lack of space is not the primary cause, but our criterion of what constitutes Jewish literature. Not every belletristic work written by a Jew on a Jewish theme, or one which portrays a Jewish character is Jewish literature. Books in which Jewish life is depicted under the conditions and circumstances of the plot not in its natural character and where the Jew frequently appears at his worst has no right to that name. Unfortunately, most of the Anglo-Jewish belletristic works written in this country belong to that type. They treat either with intermarriage, extreme assimilation, or any other negative phase of life which they label Jewish. Hence the limited selections. We do not assert that there are no other books deserving of that name, but since space prevents a complete survey, a selection had to be made, and the five works included pass the test.

## 31. NOVELS PORTRAYING PRESENT JEWISH LIFE

## i. CHARLES ANGOFF.

Among the novels in which Charles Angoff attempts to depict Jewish life in America, *Sun at Noon* is one in which that purpose is carried out faithfully and in an impressive manner. In a way, it forms the third link in a trilogy undertaken by the author to portray on a broad canvas the vicissitudes in the life of an immigrant Jewish family by the name of Polonsky who arrived in this country in the first decade of this century. But while the first two novels deal primarily with the many-phased attempts of the first generation of immigrants to adjust themselves to a new environment, this novel deals to a large extent with their children and their endeavors to find their way in the world.

The leading character is David, the son of Moshe and Nehamah Polonsky, who play an important role in the first two novels. David, raised in the Jewish "ghetto" of Boston, in a home where spiritually life was conducted in accordance with Jewish tradition, and economically impressed by the continual struggle to escape the effects of poverty, faces, on graduation from high school, the difficult problem of choosing a career. He not only is admitted to Harvard, but wins a scholarship, a fact which exalts him and gives him great encouragement. As usual with most middle-class Jewish families, he is expected to prepare himself for the medical or legal profession. But David, descended from a rabbinical family, still possesses the characteristic Jewish trait, the thirst for learning, not as a means for obtaining economic security, but *Torah le-Shema*, learning and knowledge for its own sake. After much hesitation, he chooses to study philosophy and psychology. His parents are somewhat disappointed, and his father is even afraid that philosophy may lead to disbelief. Yet he agrees, for he knows the value of knowledge and education, and is confident that a Harvard education will bring economic security, for even teaching in a high school is a good profession.

David's problem, however, continues, for his thirst for knowledge and reading knows no limit, and this leads to many difficulties in a world where social contacts and graceful manners count more than mere pursuit of knowledge. Even the very lectures of the professors do not always provide complete satisfaction, and David falls back on his own reading and research. Somehow, the author injects contentment into David's life, for he falls in love with Alice Cohen,

a college student, one whom he had known in Hebrew school. She returns his love and they are married. We are not told the profession he ultimately chooses, but we guess that he was not lost. It is enough to know that he was not disappointed in his ideal striving for knowledge, and he found happiness.

However interesting the portrayal of David's life and his struggles through his college years, the value of the novel would have been considerably less if it were not for its scope. It contains many characters, most of whom were met in the first two volumes, in addition to several new ones. All these characters play roles in the novel, for the episodes in their lives are told in great detail. We are much impressed by Moshe's nostalgia for the life of the former *Heim* in Russia before the Revolution, where Jewish life was complete, and with the high value he places on education against material possessions. We are presented with numerous scenes in the lives and activities of the many characters: weddings, funerals, and union meetings where the aspects of Socialism and labor problems are discussed and debated. In all these scenes and episodes there are reflected the attitudes of the various members toward religion, economic difficulties, and the relation between members of families. The Jewish life of the period, before the influence of general life and culture changed it to a large degree, is portrayed with much skill.

## ii. ADELE WISEMAN

Another novel of a similar character is *Sacrifice* by Adele Wiseman. It portrays the struggle of an immigrant Jewish family in a new environment, a Canadian Jewish community.

The story begins when the family, consisting of Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son Isaac, having fled from their home in the Ukraine after a pogrom in which two of their sons were killed, arrive in the Canadian community. Abraham, who is a skilled butcher, finds employment in his trade with a man named Polsky, while Isaac goes to school and the family settles down to a struggle with poverty. Isaac, however, after observing the better way of life of other Jewish families, decides to leave school and go to work in a tailor shop. Abraham who, like all Jews, values education highly, at first protests, but when the son points out that knowledge can also be gained by reading and self-study, he acquiesces. For a time, the life of the family runs smoothly; the economic situation improves and Abraham gradually finds a place in the community and makes

friends. Among them is the Shoḥet, Ḥayyim Knopp, of whom he is especially fond. Isaac also finds his way socially. Utilizing his Hebrew education, he gives lessons in Hebrew which increases his earnings, and shortly thereafter, begins to court a girl by the name of Ruth. His readings and his associations bring about a change in his religious views which becomes evident in stray remarks he makes at home. His father protests against his attitude and working on the Sabbath, but this difference in view between father and son does not sever their relations. Isaac is married to Ruth who proves to be a good daughter-in-law, and when she gives birth to a son whom she names Moshe after one of the brothers who was killed, joy reigns in the family.

Soon, however, the wheel of fate turns: Sarah becomes sick and dies; shortly after that Isaac is severely burned when he rushes into the burning synagogue to save the Sefer Torah, and he too dies. Abraham overwhelmed by these deaths, finds some consolation in his grandchild who shows an inclination for music; his violin playing and singing gladden Abraham's heart. But, again, he is crushed by sorrows; his hand is injured, and his employer threatens to discharge him. A conflict arises between him and Ruth who, urged by a friend, Harry, plans to open a store. This plan is interpreted by Abraham as an intention to marry Harry. Quarrels break out, and after a severe one, Abraham leaves the house. He wanders aimlessly through the streets and finally pays a visit to a Leiah, a woman of loose character; when she attempts to seduce him, he, possessed by madness or accidentally kills her. He is given a long prison sentence, where his grandson, who has become a famous violinist, visits him on Yom Kippur; a visit which revives the attachment between the two.

Whether the entire narrative and the series of events related justify such a dramatic turn of events in Abraham's life is questionable. There is neither logical nor psychological necessity for such an episode. It is used to create effect. However, the value of the novel is not seriously impaired by this episode, for its greatest worth lies in character presentation, in the portrayal of Jewish family life, and in the recreation of community life. Abraham, though poorly educated and of average intelligence, impresses us by his profound belief in God. In spite of the great suffering he has undergone, only once does he express doubt in the goodness and justice of God. His frequent discussions with his friend, the Shoḥet, contain many wise reflections on human life.



The action of Isaac in saving the Torah while endangering his own life certainly requires an explanation as to motive. Abraham himself frequently asks Isaac what incited him to risk his life. The answer he gives, his desire to save the expense of writing a new Torah, is a frivolous one. Nor can we accept the interpretation of the author herself, who suggests that he did it for the sake of his father, and for that reason she called the novel *Sacrifice*. I think that Isaac could really offer no explanation for his act. The fire generated an impulse to save what is most holy to every Jew trained in his tradition. The doubts which afflict him in later life could not uproot that imbedded sense of tradition.

The other characters in the story are equally well drawn. Abraham's friend, the Shoḥet, is a man of deep piety and humanity, and even his employer, Polsky, whose Jewishness is slight, who pursues money and women, helps Abraham in his need. The narrative is seasoned with witty remarks and good humor. And while the story often reflects the deteriorating effects of the new environment, the emphasis is on the finer side of life.

### iii. WOLF MONKOWITZ

Wolf Monkowitz has several novels and a number of short stories to his credit, in which he portrays Jewish life in Whitechapel, the East Side of London, when it was the ghetto of that city. He is at his best in a rather small novel, *A Kid for Two Farthings*. The plot revolves around the lives and actions of three people: Kandinsky, a pantsmaker, whose shop and home are on Fashion Street, London; his assistant, Shmule Hammer; and Joe, a boy of six, the son of a poor family who lives with his mother in a room at Kandinsky's. His father had left for South Africa. Kandinsky, who is a good-natured man, loves the youngster who spends most of his time, while his mother is working, in Kandinsky's tailor-shop.

After Joe's father leaves for Africa, Kandinsky begins to read about that country. He is especially attracted by its fauna and regales Joe with animal stories. Of all the stories, Joe is mostly impressed by that of the unicorn, whom Kandinsky portrays with vivid imagination, especially its horn which he estimates as being worth twenty-eight thousand dollars. Joe decides to buy a small unicorn as a pet, as he lost his pet chicken. Kandinsky humors him and even lends him a little money. Joe buys a small goat, one of whose horns had just begun to appear. Joe is sure that this is a unicorn. Kandinsky

names the unicorn Africana, and Joe is happy. The assistant, Shmule, humors both Joe and Kandinsky, and for a while the unicorn plays an important role in the house on Fashion Street.

A little later, Shmule, a strong man, who has developed his muscles in the gymnasium, decides to become a champion fighter, hoping to earn enough money to buy a diamond ring for his fiancée. There is much talk in the house and shop about Shmule's prospects, in which Joe participates. After a number of trials, Shmule succeeds in defeating several fighters and even the champion. Joy reigns in the house on Fashion Street, and in the hearts of Shmule and his girl. But things do not fare well with Africana. She is ailing and is put out in the yard. The first thing Joe does after the fight is to rush out in the yard to tell Africana the good news of Shmule's championship, but she is not to be found. Kandinsky helps him in his search, and he cannot find her either. He picks up a golden coin from the ground. Kandinsky explains to Joe that the unicorn, tired of life in London, has gone back to Africa, and left him the sovereign as part payment for its valuable horn. She may come back—and she may not. Joe is not greatly disappointed, for the business spirit, which he has acquired in his environment, tells him that with the sovereign he can buy many pets and charge admission to his friends who come to see them.

The goodness of Kandinsky's character shines forth in the last act, for he was a poor man; he probably gave his last sovereign to save little Joe the pain at his pet's death. The portrayal of Shmule's successes, the fights, the joy and gladness which reigns in the audience, of Whitechapel Jews who are proud of having a Jewish champion fighter, and the happiness of Shmule and his girl is masterfully executed. But more than everything, we enjoy the air of childhood warmth which saturates the depiction of Joe's participation in the life of his elders, his dreams, and his pranks. There is deep understanding of a child's mind. It is, of course, understood that the title is borrowed from the song of the Haggadah, *Had Gadya*, in which the father buys a kid for two zuzim, two farthings.

### 32. HISTORICAL NOVELS

#### i. HOWARD FAST

*My Glorious Brothers* by the prolific novelist, Howard Fast, is a historical novel which is distinguished by its inspiring content and its fine form. The theme is the role of Mattathias and his sons in

the uprising of the Jews against the Syrians in defense of their religion and their land.

The story, from the beginning of that uprising by Mattathias and the subsequent battles carried on by Judah Maccabee to his fall in battle, is told by Simon, one of the brothers, 'who was high priest and ruler of Judea from 142 to 135 B.C.E.

One of the outstanding qualities of this historical novel is the dramatic presentation of events which makes the reader feel as if he were participating in them. With great imaginative skill the author reconstructs the scenes of the battles in their completeness, describing every move and turn. With similar vividness and vigor are drawn the scenes depicting the call to the uprising and the continuation of the struggle, against all obstacles, by Mattathias, Judah, and others.

The characterization of the three leading figures in the great historical episode—Mattathias, Judah, and the supposed narrator, Simon—is well-rounded. The head of the family or as the author calls him the *Adon*, which I interpret to mean mayor of the village of Modiin, is revealed to us in the full glory of his strength of character, in his devotion to God, and his readiness to sacrifice himself and his children for God, his religion, and the freedom of Israel. The greatness of Judah's personality is revealed not only in Simon's evaluation of him, but also in his actions. He is not only the man of single purpose, the freedom of the land and of the people, but also the "Maccabee," a term which the author endows with a mystic content as a synonym for the Messiah, though he knows the supposed derivation of the term from *Makebet*, a hammer. Simon is revealed to us in his strength and his weakness through his own narrative.

On the whole, the narrative is true to history, but there are a number of embellishments—for example, the description of Mattathias' visit with his five sons, to the Temple prior to the uprising, when he breaks the altar placed there by the Greeks and dedicated to Zeus; and the burning of the Scrolls of the Torah in the synagogue of Modiin by the Greeks. In the later scene, the author introduces the killing of Ruth, the fiancée of Simon, and attributes directly to Judah the killing of the three Greek generals, Apelles, Appolonius, and Nikanor, and not as the historians record, that they were killed in battle. He also introduces new characters, and has them play a role in the uprising. One of these is Ragish, who, in the historical records, committed suicide when pressed by Nikanor to reveal the whereabouts

of Judah. But the author assigns him an important part in the uprising. He calls him rabbi and makes him an itinerant propagandist for the rebellion and Judah's companion in many battles. All these add to the vividness and idealization of this great struggle and to the magnificence of the victory of spiritual idealism over crass materialism and brutality.

The value of the book is enhanced by the last fifty pages which contain an imaginary report to the Roman Senate by the legate, Lentulus Selanus, who came to Simon to effect an alliance between Rome and Judea. This report reflects the Gentile conception of the Jews at that time and their difficulty to understand our conception of God, our laws, especially that of the Sabbath, as well as our rather lenient attitude toward slaves. In the description of this attitude, Fast errs somewhat. Only Jewish slaves are supposed to be freed at the end of the sixth year, and not as given in the report, that all slaves, Jewish and non-Jewish, are freed at the end of seven years.

## ii. LOUIS ZARA

Another historical novel is *Blessed Is The Land* by Louis Zara. The subject deals with the settlement of the Jews in New Amsterdam, later New York. The narrative is given, with the exception of a few chapters, in the form of a diary by Asher Levy, the principal character of the story.

In the first part Asher tells of his life in Amsterdam, of the years of his stay in Recife, Brazil, of the expulsion of the Jews from that country by the Portuguese, of the journey of thirty-six Sephardic Jews to the Dutch Colony, New Amsterdam, and the tribulations they suffered during the voyage until their arrival there on September 7, 1654. The other parts relate primarily the story of Asher himself during the twenty-six years, from 1654 to 1680, the year of his death. The name of Asher Levy is mentioned frequently in the early annals of American Jewish history, but this is the first attempt to give a lengthy account of his adjustment, as well as his brethren, to conditions in the new country. In this account, the character of Levy is revealed to us in its strength and weakness, with emphasis on his attempts to strike root in this land which he and his brethren call the blessed land.

Hard and many were the struggles of this small group of Jews, and when the order from the head office of the Dutch West India Company came, allowing them to settle in the land, they fought for

the attainment of rights which would enable them to live both as free burghers and as Jews.

In all these struggles Levy was the moving spirit. The narrative recreates all the episodes of Asher's life, his various urban business ventures, his association with another Jew, Jacob Bar Simson, in the fur trade with the Indians, and the financial support he received in that venture from a Dutch woman. Similarly, we are told of his participation in the communal life of the colony in general, and of the Jewish population in particular. He fought for the right to become a member of the garrison defending the city, participated in repelling the attack of the Indians on New Amsterdam, bargained with them for the return of Dutch prisoners, and endeavored to obtain permission to build a synagogue and acquire a grant of land for a cemetery. He also made many friends among the Indians and even adopted an Indian boy at the request of his dying father.

All these activities are represented against a detailed background of the negative and positive aspects of life in the colony, including the attitude of the Dutch population toward the Jews, as well as of their mutual social and commercial relations. Nor do we miss the hold of the Jewish tradition upon the settlers. There are occasional apostates, but most of the people retain the traditions of Judaism. The author delves into the life of that time in an earnest endeavor to resuscitate it in its historical form in an able and skillful manner.

## PART II

### Jewish Learning and Thought



## CHAPTER VII

### BIBLE EXEGESIS AND LEXICOGRAPHY

#### 33. INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Jewish learning and its expression in scholarly activity, outside the United States, and to a degree, England, was limited to Israel during the last period. As a result, it was also limited to Hebrew. However, both of these limitations did not greatly impair its productivity, for Israel serves not only as a center for gathering of the exiles, but also for the men of intellect and scholarship. Thither came the men who had gained prominence in many fields of science and learning, and they continued activity in their chosen fields. Consequently, there is hardly a branch of Jewish learning to which important additions were not made during this period.

Special productivity is to be noted in the branches of history, archeology, literary history, and biography. Great interest is also displayed in Biblical studies. The environment of the land where the Bible was created and where a large part of Jewish history was enacted serves as an impetus for men of knowledge to widen their activity in these literary branches.

Nor is the field of Talmudics and Rabbinics neglected. Many important contributions were made in this field, especially by scientific editions of outstanding works and also by the publication of works from manuscript. Due to lack of space, the survey must be limited to a few selected works in each field of learning.

#### 34. BIBLE EXEGESIS

##### i. EZEKIEL KAUFMANN

An important and embracing work on the history of the Jewish religion from early times to the end of the Second Commonwealth, is the *Toldoth ha-Emunah ha-Yisraelit Mimé Kedem ad Sof Baith Sheni* by Ezekiel Kaufmann. Each of its three volumes is subdivided into three books.



The purpose of the work is, as the author states in his introduction, to invalidate the two leading views of the Wellhausen school of Biblical criticism. The first is the fundamental one which posits that considerable parts of the Pentateuch or the Torah were composed during the first centuries of the Second Commonwealth. These parts are designated by the critics as the priestly code. The second view, which stems from the first, is that during a large part of the period of the First Commonwealth, monotheism was not the belief of the people at large, but only of individuals. In early times, these individuals were primarily priests, but from the middle of the Eighth century B.C.E., it was the prophets, beginning with Amos, who carried the message of monotheism to the people. It is they who had perfected it into a complete view of one God who rules the world. But even then the people, as a whole, did not accept it, and the prophets continued to struggle against the belief of the people, which was mixed with paganism until after the exile. Only after the return from exile was monotheism implanted in Israel.

Kaufmann undertakes to prove that this view about the Jewish religion held by the critics has no basis, and similarly, there is no foundation to the view of the late composition of parts of the Pentateuch. He asserts that the Jewish religion is an original creation of the nation and is unique in the ancient world. It is a fundamental idea of Israel's national culture which is reflected in all its creative works from antiquity. The extent of Kaufmann's works and their multiplicity of subjects prevent us from giving even the shortest summary. We will therefore present only a brief outline of their teachings.

Kaufmann begins his task by offering proofs for his introductory postulate that monotheism is a fundamental idea of the people as a whole, from the genesis of Judaism. All other views which posit development are baseless. He names several such views. One asserts that the God of Israel, called by the name of *Adonai* (Lord),\* was originally a God of storm, but because of His connection with the people throughout their history, He became first a national God interested in social and moral actions, and finally there emerged the religion of moral monotheism. Against this view, Kaufmann points

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\* *Adonai*, or Lord in English, is a substitute for the real name, which consists of four letters, YHWH, also called tetragrammaton, which, out of reverence, is pronounced *Adonai*, i.e., Lord, the name used in the English Bible.

out, that even in paganism the gods possess social and moral attributes, and yet no monotheism had emerged.

Another view asserts that the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan served as motives for the rise of monotheism, because the good which God had bestowed upon the people widened their conception of His power. Again, the author points out that other nations were more successful, and yet remained polytheists. He opposes the critical view that monotheism is a result of the long struggle of men of chosen spirits, first the priests and later the prophets, against polytheism, with the fact that in the entire Bible there is no war carried on with the pagan myths, nor does the Bible seem to offer definite knowledge about the historical forms of paganism. It is conceived as mere fetishism which is often spoken of in a derisive way. Were some form of paganism prevalent in Israel during the historical period, not only as a matter of imitation by some kings, or apostates, but as a matter of belief, the Bible would have recorded more details about that paganism.

In addition, he points out, in the entire Bible there is no vestige of real mythology which is so prominent in all forms of paganism. There may be some mythological expressions, but no mythology. All this proves that we cannot assume a gradual development of monotheism out of preceding paganism, but we must assume it as an original intuitional idea. However, since the people lived in a pagan environment, there had to be a struggle against attempts to stray from it, but monotheism was always present.

He then develops his view of the composition of the Torah which opposes that of Wellhausen and his followers, and of course, disproves their theory of the gradual development of monotheism. Yet he does not accept the traditional view of the origin of the Books of the Torah. He accepts the usual division of the sources of which they are composed. One source is called J. E., namely a source joined from two previous ones, one in which only the name Lord is used, and another where the divine name of Elohim is used; the priestly source called P which covers the Book of Leviticus and many sections in the other books; and the Book of Deuteronomy. He opposes only the order of the composition of priestly source in the period of the Second Temple, and as said, from such disapproval, there follows also the invalidity of the theory of the late rise of monotheism in Israel through gradual development.

He propounds a general view of the Pentateuch which is as fol-

laws: from the time of Moses, when the Jewish people had conceived the intuitive idea of monotheism, there arose in every generation prophets or divine messengers who guarded the existence of that idea in Israel. As a result, there developed several groups of literary creations in which there were preserved laws and old traditions about the relation of God to the world, to religious conduct, as well as to ethical precepts. These groups of writings, or rather scrolls which, while they had much in common, had also differences, constituted the literature which was later organized into the Torah. The differences, though, are recognized even in the Torah, and for this reason he claims that the sources which the critics call by the names J. E., priestly book, and Deuteronomy contain three arrangements of laws and precepts, or in other words, three orders of laws. The first order is contained in the part of the Torah called by the critics J. E. sources, primarily placed in the Book of Exodus; the second, the priestly order of laws, is largely found in the Book of Leviticus and also partly in Exodus and Numbers; and the third order in the Book of Deuteronomy. As to this book all scholars agree (on the basis of the story told in 2 Kings, XXII:8—XXIII:2) that a book was found in the Temple in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah who then made a covenant with the people to observe its laws, that the book is the Book of Deuteronomy. Kaufmann agrees with this view and says that it was a complete book and that it contained both the legal order and also the narrative part, as it is contained in the hallowed text of the Torah.

As for the other collection of laws and narratives, says Kaufmann, we have no definite date for their completion, but they are of earlier date than Deuteronomy. Kaufmann devotes the bulk of his first book in Volume I to prove that the priestly code had preceded Deuteronomy. He disproves all arguments of the Wellhausen school in relation to the date of this code, which are primarily based on the view that certain laws in that code which relate to gifts allotted to priests and Levites were enacted only during the Second Commonwealth, and shows that these arguments are groundless. And, as mentioned, their theory of the late appearance of monotheism loses ground.

The process of organizing the Pentateuch by integrating the other two collections of laws and narratives together with the Book of Deuteronomy most likely began, according to Kaufmann in the time of Hezekiah, and had reached its end at the very beginning of the Second Commonwealth when all the three parts of laws were joined

into the Book of the Torah. He then devotes himself to the delineation of the leading conceptions of monotheism conveyed by the people as a whole, and reflected in the Biblical Books from Joshua to 2 Kings.

The basic concepts, he says were laid down in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, a part of the priestly collection, where it is stated that God is the Creator of the world and of man whom He endows with freedom. In these chapters, Israel is not mentioned, and God is the universal God of all men. Similarly, His providence and care are extended to all nations. We read that God determined the fate of the peoples descended from Noah (Genesis, IX:26,27). In another Book of the Torah, we read that He gave to the children of Esau their land, and similarly to many other nations (Deuteronomy, II:5,19). Moreover, He demands that all nations observe the ethical laws laid down for them in the code known as the seven Noahide laws (Genesis, IX:1-7), and punishes them for their transgressions, as evident in His punishment of the Sodomites. The universalism of the God idea is thus clearly stated in the Biblical literature preceding the prophetic writings.

Nor is this universalism opposed by the belief in the covenant that God made with Israel, giving them the Torah and electing them as His people. We must distinguish, says Kaufmann, between the rule and providence of God and His grace. The former extends to all, but the latter is limited to Israel. With this people which rose to the highest God-idea in its early history, God has close relations, and His presence dwells with them and their land.

In the biblical view, the world is divided into two parts, the land of the nations and the land of Israel, which is frequently called the Holy Land. But God's universal rule is not diminished thereby. In fact, it is stated in Deuteronomy I:19, that God Himself allotted to all other peoples the host of heaven as objects of worship. For this reason there is no mention in the Bible of their punishment for idol worship; this is limited to ethical transgressions. From this view of monotheism, imbedded in the preprophetic biblical literature, Kaufmann explains all verses which the critics used as proof that in prophetic times monotheism was not yet prevalent in Israel, but that their religion was rather a national one. The verse in Deuteronomy, XXV-III: 64, which states that when Israel is scattered, its people will worship gods made by the hand of man, or the verse in I Samuel, XXVI: 19, in which David points out that those who wish to drive

him from the land of Israel say to him, "Go worship other gods," do not, according to Kaufmann, imply that the rule of the God of Israel ceases at the boundary of Eretz Yisrael, as the critics imply. It merely means that the proper worship of God for an Israelite can be performed only in his own land which is sanctified by God's covenant with the people of Israel. Kaufmann thus establishes the prevalence of the concept of pure monotheism in Israel even before the prophets appeared on the scene.

He buttresses his view by showing that the prophetic literature differs greatly from all other parts of the Bible—Torah, historical books, Joshua to 2 Kings, and the Hagiographa. The Books of the Prophets differ not only in style, which is primarily one of reproach and chastisement, but also in content, which differs greatly from that of other parts. The Books of the Prophets teach that sin determines the fate of the nation, and emphasize exile to other lands as the form of punishment, and, at times, even mentions the land to which they will be exiled as Ashur or Babylonia. They emphasize, along with exile, the return to their own land. Moreover, the emphasis on punishment for sin is discussed primarily in terms of the social aspects of moral transgression—oppression of the poor and injustice, for instance. It is true that apostasy and the occasional worship of idols will also bring punishment, but moral transgression has always been an important factor in determining the fate of Israel.

Of special importance is the stress, in the prophetic books on the vision of the last days when polytheism will be abolished and knowledge of God will be spread to all nations. The prophets do not teach monotheism, for this was known and accepted by the people as a whole. They chastise only those who stray from the way of God. The Torah and the group of historical books have none of these new ideas and concepts. We therefore can see that the view of monotheism as the product of prophetic teachings has no validity.

The invalidation of the prevailing view regarding the order of composition of the books of the Torah, and the result drawn from it (the lateness of the rise of monotheism), is as stated, the primary purpose of Kaufmann's book. But it contains much more than that. It justifies its title, *History of the Religion of Israel*, for it deals with numerous-religious views and institutions and presents them in all aspects. On the whole, the presentation is close to tradition, rejecting numerous conjectures of the critics as to their late origin and distorted views. In addition, two volumes are devoted to the prophetic

books, from Amos to Ezekiel, in which the characterization of the message of each of the prophets is presented in detail, and the time of composition of each book and the political background discussed, along with other aspects relating to a full appreciation of this exalted literature.

Kaufmann also published the first book of the fourth volume dealing with the literature of the first period of the Second Commonwealth, but as it is to be followed by two more books completing the history of the Second Commonwealth, we shall postpone discussion until all three volumes are published.

## ii. M. D. CASSUTTO

Another work which attacks the critical view of the composition of the Pentateuch at its very foundation, namely the documentary or source theory, is the *Torat ha-Teudot* (The Theory of the Documents) by M. D. Cassutto. The very basis of that theory is that two different terms are employed in the Books of the Pentateuch to denote the Godhead, namely *Elohim* and *Adonai* (Lord). It was the notice of the use of these two names which prompted the French physician, D'Astruc, to publish (1753) a book which posited that Moses used two different earlier sources in the composition of Genesis. Subsequent scholars found more changes and elaborated this conjecture into a system which indicated that the parts of the Pentateuch stem from a number of sources, and concluded that parts of the books were composed at different times, much later than the time of Moses; some parts even, as noted above, after the return from the Babylonian exile. Cassutto classifies the grounds for the theory into five points and proceeds to invalidate them, dealing first with the two divine names.

He starts his discussion by pointing out that *Elohim* is an appellative name of God, as conceived by the Jews and also by other Semitic peoples, as a name denoting in general the concept of God. Also, the gods of other nations are called in the Bible by that name, while the name Lord, or rather the Tetragramaton, is a proper name for God as conceived by Israel—the God of the world who elected it as His people. Cassutto then surveys the use of the names in the Bible as a whole and finds that in the prophetic books, *Elohim* is never used instead of Lord with the exception of twice in the Book of Jonah, and several times in the later chapters of Isaiah (XL-LXVI) for special reasons; in the legal parts of the Bible, namely in all such chapters

of the Torah and in Ezekiel where the subject of law is discussed, there is no other name but Lord; and in the poetic portions, with the exception of some in which the influence of Wisdom literature is evident, only Lord is used.

The case is different with the Wisdom literature. In the poetic part of the Book of Job, Lord is used only once (XII:9), and the manuscripts read, even there, *Elohim*. In the prologue (I:II) and eilogue XXXIX—XLI) only the name Lord is employed. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, only *Elohim*, and in Proverbs, *Elohim* and *Elohai* are interchanged with the name Lord. There is a view among scholars that in a number of Psalms the change from Lord to *Elohim* was intentional, avoiding the frequent pronunciation of God's name, in the form of the Tetragramaton, out of reverence. Cassutto accepts this view and provides an additional reason for the use of *Elohim* in the Wisdom literature. That literature, says he, is of instructional character and the content aims primarily at general human ethical improvement with no specific Jewish aspect, for other nations with whom the Jews came in contact had similar literatures. It is therefore reasonable that the general term for the Godhead should have been used to emphasize that these teachings apply to all men. Cassutto adds that a number of writers or singers of Psalms were influenced by the Wisdom literature, and, hence, the name *Elohim* is used.

The author then turns to the crux of the matter, the narrative portions of the Torah, and, limiting himself to Genesis, says that we must keep in mind the fact that the narrative portions contain reworked ancient Oriental material, and records events of international character. The influence of Wisdom literature is also evident. The alternate use of the two names in the narrative of Genesis, occupies a middle place between the use of the name Lord in the national forms of literature, mentioned above, where it is employed almost without exception, and the Wisdom literature where *Elohim* is prevalent.

Cassutto then lays down rules for the use of the two names—the name Lord is used when the content reflects the Jewish conception of the Godhead expressed by His accepted attributes, especially when stressing His moral character; *Elohim* is used when the content reflects the abstract concept of the Godhead as the Creator of the physical world, as the Director of nature, and as the Source of life; Lord is used when the content expresses the intuitive conception of the Jewish people of the Godhead, or the enthusiasm of the prophetic spirit, while *Elohim* is used when expressing the concepts of men of

thought regarding important problems of the world and human life; the former is employed when the desire is to arouse in the reader exaltation for the divine presence, and the latter when the subject aims to remind the reader of simple divine matters which do not need the use of the holier name; Lord is used when emphasis is laid upon the permanent relation of God to man or even to nature, and *Elohim* when the reference is to the transcendence of God above the world, and similarly, the former is employed when the relation spoken of is to His people or its ancestors, and the latter, when the relation is to a nation or to an individual who do not belong to His chosen people.

Cassutto illustrates the application of his rules with a number of examples of which we will quote several. In the first chapter of Genesis, God is the Creator of the world, its Lord and Ruler. Creation was accomplished by mere speech, with no tangible contact between Him and nature. Consequently, *Elohim* is used in that chapter. As for the name *Elohim* used in the narrative about the Sabbath, the reason is that, though the precept to observe the Sabbath was given only to Israel, it is connected with the creation of the cosmos and its holiness precedes Israel, therefore *Elohim* is used. In the larger part of Chapter II: 4-25 and Chapter III, when the narrative centers around the placing of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and their expulsion from it, God appears as the source of ethical conduct, for He orders Adam to observe His command and makes him responsible for its observance, and His personal relation to man, symbolized by Adam, is emphasized, the name Lord is used. *Elohim* attached to the former, is added to indicate that the divine Being spoken of in these chapters is the same as the *Elohim* in the first chapter. Only in the conversation of the serpent, symbol of evil, with Eve, is *Elohim* alone used out of reverence. It is true that in this story there are several reworked items taken from Oriental traditions, but these are only items, while the motifs of the chapters is entirely ethical, and hence the primary name in use is Lord, and *Elohim* an addition for the purpose indicated.

In Chapter IV, the name Cain is connected with the name Lord, as Eve says, "I have begotten a man with the help of the Lord," and considers herself a participant in the act of creation, as the event is new to her. But when she begat the third child, she looked on it as an event in the process of life and called him Seth from the root *Shit*, to do, and she mentions that *Elohim*, God, who is the source of life, gave him to her instead of Abel (IV:15). This is the only time that



the name *Elohim* is used in this chapter instead of Lord. He continues to explain many more differences in usage through a large part of Genesis.

In explaining the repetition of the creation of Adam and Eve, and especially the detailed story of the creation of Eve, while the creation of both is already given in the first chapter, the author utilizes an explanation already mentioned by Rashi in his commentary on Chapter 27, that in the first chapter the general story of the creation of the world and the creatures in it, including man and woman, is given briefly, but when the story of the life of the first man and woman becomes the main subject, the details about the creation of Adam and Eve are stated. He thus continues to invalidate all other arguments by which the view of the critics, primarily of the Wellhausen school, is supported.

He comes to the conclusion that in spite of differences which are found in certain places, the Pentateuch is a unified work and not a compilation derived from different sources. He admits, though, that before the Torah was written, several traditions were prevalent in Israel about the early generations and about the lives of the ancestors of the nation. Some of these traditions might have differed to a larger degree from the one presented, but these were not included in the Torah. He points to the fact that the Cherubim and the flaming sword, said in the Torah to have been placed by God to guard the entrance to Paradise, are preceded by a definite article which shows that both things were known to the people prior to the writing of the Torah. He also emphasizes another point in this work. He asserts, like Kaufmann, that the Torah in all its parts preceded the prophetic books which are but a continuation of the spirit of the Torah. The apparent difference of view between these two groups of biblical books stem from the differences in content of the prophetic books and their purpose.

The work just discussed was really planned as an introduction to a commentary on the entire Torah, but Cassutto was prevented from carrying out his purpose by death. Only a part of that commentary was written and is contained in three books, *Mé-Adam ad Noah*, *Mé-Noah ad Abraham*, and a partial commentary on Exodus. The first includes his commentary on Genesis Chapters I-VI; the second covers Chapter VI:9—XI:32. In this book there is added a partial commentary on the portion of Genesis called *Lek Lekah* (XII:1—XIII:5).

The commentary has two purposes, first to show that the division of the Torah into various sources by the critics from which there followed the assignments of parts, and, at times, single verses in each chapter to different sources is on the whole baseless, and the unity is evident when the chapters are properly explained. Second, it offers an explanation of the portions of the Bible dealt with in the best exegetic manner, based on scientific principles. Attention is paid to the elicitation of the linguistic meaning of words, to the literary forms employed in the portions or *Parshot*, and to the thoughts imbedded in the words, verses, and chapters. Special effort is made by Cassutto to remove all difficulties, both those used by critics as a basis of division into sources, and general ones, such as contradictions, repetitions, and others which the literal meaning of the words may present, but on delving deeper, the sense is clarified and the difficulty disappears.

His method is to divide the biblical text into sections based on the facts and thoughts presented in them and not to follow the usual division into chapters in the printed book of the Torah. These sections are further divided into subsections, each of which emphasizes a certain action. The sections are prefaced by introductions which deal with the nature and character of the contents and literary form. As illustration of the value of the commentary, we will quote several explanations advanced by the author which remove apparent difficulties.

He points to such difficulties as the existence of day and night before the creation of luminaries and systemlessness in expressions placed at the end of completed actions in the process of creation the (end is expressed by the phrase, "and it was so," but the expression is omitted several times. Similarly, the expression "it is good," used frequently in the creation story, is omitted at times); there seems to be no harmony in the distribution of the actual creation in six days (light, heaven, earth, and plants were created in the first three days; and luminaries on the fourth; fishes and birds on the fifth; animals and man on the sixth).

Last point, is clarified in the introduction. Cassutto points out there that the acts of creation are divided into two parallel series thus: on the first day light is created; on the second, heaven and sea; on the third, earth and its products, the plants—these creations constitute the first series. The second series, says he, parallels it. Parallel to the light of the first day are the luminaries created on the fourth; parallel to

heaven and seas created on the second day are the fish and birds which inhabit the two former creations; parallel to the earth and the plants created on the third, are the animals and man which inhabit the earth and eat the plants thereof, created on the sixth day.

In the commentary proper, he explains, as mentioned, form and content, clarifying them. The use of the two names for God, *Elohim* and Lord, he explains in the way stated by him in the Book of Documents, discussed above. As for the omission of "it was so" after the creation of light and the creation of birds and fish, while it is used in other creations, Cassutto explains that the expression "it was so" denotes permanent existence, while the light created on the first day was a temporary one. In a similar manner, he explains the absence of this expression after the creation of the fish and birds because the great sea monsters included in that creation, according to a statement in the Talmud, later disappeared.

The absence of the expression "it is good" at the end of the action on the second day: he explains that it is used when the work is completed. In this case, with the creation of heaven, the physical world as such was not yet completed. Completion had to wait until the seas were created. Then the world which consists of three parts, heaven, earth, and sea, was complete. The existence of light before the luminaries, he says, is no difficulty, for even now there is the light of the lightning which does not come from the luminaries. Besides, it was a special creation.

In the introduction to the second book, he discusses at length the various stories of the flood found in the Assyrian and Babylonian epics, especially in the *Gilgamesh* epic and in the account of the Babylonian priest, Berosus. He believes that even the pre-Torah literature of the Jews possessed similar epics. But, says he, what a difference there is between the Babylonian stories and the one in the Torah! How exalted and elevated is the thought presented in the Torah story; the very features of the story itself fade before it. The world which God created must be a moral one, and when violence and immoral conduct were prevalent in it, God declared that all people who had sinned, and even part of the world itself, must be destroyed, but the few good people, such as Noah and his family, and some other creatures shall be saved in order to rehabilitate life once more. In this way, the story in the Torah is one of the great ethical contributions of Judaism.

Very ingenious is his explanation of one of the principal obscuri-

ties in the sections, namely the differences in the commands regarding the animals to be taken into the ark. In the first command, it says a pair of each species, clean and unclean, shall be taken (VI:19), while the second one says seven pairs of the clean ones and only a pair of the unclean ones (VII:2). He calls attention to the different verbs used in the verses. In the first case, it is the verb *Tobi*, to bring in, but in the second case, it is *Tikah*, you shall take. Those that were clean were prepared for sacrifices, and Noah must not wait for them to come, he must search for them and take more. But for the other, he has to wait for their coming and then take them in; their number can be smaller as he cannot use them for sacrifices, but for the survival of the species. And since the sacrifices are for the Lord, that name is used in the second passage, while in the first, *Elohim* is employed.

Cassutto's works are distinguished by keen analysis and penetration into the meaning of Hebrew words and expressions which enabled him to invalidate the principal grounds of the critical view of the Bible. They also help us to a better understanding of the parts of the Torah upon which he comments. They thus comprise an important contribution to Jewish learning.

### iii. H. TUR SINAI

An important three-volume work containing philological and exegetical studies is *Lashon we-Sefer* (The Language and the Book) by H. Tur Sinai. The first volume deals with problems relating to the Hebrew language, such as the proper meaning of a number of words in the Bible, and with the old Hebrew script in which the Bible was written, etc. However, the studies regarding the meaning of words can be considered as a contribution to biblical exegesis, for the new meaning attributed to the words by the author offer a fresh interpretation of the biblical verses in which they occur.

The volume is divided into three sections, the first of which deals primarily with the final forms of the five letters, *Mem*, *Nun*, *Zadik*, *Pé* and *Kaf*, which they possess in addition to the regular one. These forms, with the exception of the *Mem*, are simpler and straighter than the middle ones. The Talmud questions the source of the final forms of these letters—one view is that they were introduced by the seers, a term for prophets. In contrast, another Talmudic statement asserts that the prophets were not allowed to introduce innovations into the law, but merely to interpret it. Tur Sinai proposes that these

forms were known from early times, but were forgotten, and the prophets reintroduced them. The Jerusalem Talmud says that they are of Mosaic origin. Both append the following story: young students entered the Academy and delivered a homily on the double forms of the letters, and among them, according to this story, were Eliezer ben Hyrkanos and Joshua ben Hananya, disciples of Johanan ben Zakkai.

These statements, says Tur Sinai, really tell us nothing definite about why and when the final forms of these letters were introduced. Furthermore, on examining Hebrew inscriptions, even some written during the Second Commonwealth period, he found numerous exceptions to the use of the final forms and that some inscriptions do not use them at all. Therefore, we cannot assume that these forms date from prophetic times or even from the centuries which immediately followed.

In order to find a solution to this problem, the author recommends a knowledge of the changes in the Hebrew script. Its old form was an adaptation of the Phoenician script which was also used in Aramaic writings. The form adopted later is the square script, called in the Talmud, *Ktab Ashuri* (Assyrian script). The Talmud ascribes the change to Ezra, and considers it a new script, but the general scientific view is that it is merely the last change in a series of changes which the older script had undergone during the ages—there is numerous evidence to support this thesis. The old form was still in use during the Second Commonwealth period for extra-biblical writings, and, at times, for biblical. The inscriptions on the coins of the Macabean Kings and some biblical scrolls (including fragments of such scrolls), recently discovered in the Qumran caves, are written in this script.

Coming back to the introduction of the final forms of the five letters, Tur Sinai quotes evidence to prove that their final acceptance cannot be dated before the second century C.E. He devotes himself primarily to the letter *Mem*. He points out that the Massoretic biblical text contains two places where the order of the two forms of the *Mem* is not observed. In Isaiah, IX;6, the *Mem* in the word *Le Marbe* is written in the final form, though it comes in the middle of the word. Again, in Nehemiah II:13, the *Mem* in the word *Hem* is written in the middle form. A statement in the Midrash lists four more uses of the middle form of the *Mem* at the end of words. The

Midrash says that the list is copied from a scroll of the Pentateuch in a synagogue in Rome called the Synagogue of Severus.

Much light is thrown on the use or non-use of the final forms of the five letters by the Qumran scrolls discovered since 1949. Some, says Tur Sinai, entirely follow the Massoretic order of the two forms of the five letters; others follow the Massoretic order for the *Mem* and the *Nun*, but use only the middle form for both the middle and end of words for the other three letters. In the fragment of the Book of Leviticus, written in the old Hebrew script, there is only one form for the five letters.

The author comes to the conclusion that the form of the final *Mem* merely constituted another way of writing the *Mem*. Originally, only one form was used, the bent or the open one, now the middle form. Then, some scribes also began to use the closed form, but the place where it should be used was not determined. Later, however, it was decided to make a distinction in the usage, namely the open form in the middle and beginning of words, and the closed form at the end. As for the double form of the other letters, the author thinks that it was purposely decided upon in order to fix the final change in the script so as to make it distinct from the old Hebrew script which was still used in Aramaic writings as well as by the Samaritans.

Tur Sinai thinks that, on the basis of the above-mentioned Talmudic story, counting Eliezer and Joshua among the young students who delivered the homily on the double forms, the time of the final fixation and acceptance of the double forms of the final letters can definitely be placed at the beginning of the second century C.E.

Of the other two sections of the volume, the second is of interest, to a large degree, to the specialist in grammar, but the third section, especially those parts which discuss the different meanings of a large number of words, will interest all students of the Bible. A number of these new meanings seem to be far-fetched, though supported through comparison with nouns and verbal roots of other Semitic languages. The content of the verse is much better explained by the accepted meaning. Many times, in order to adjust the new meaning to the content, the author introduces a change of letters in the word itself or in one near it, and ascribes the Massoretic reading to an error by a copyist. Still, there is a number of new meanings introduced which greatly improves the sense of the verses in which the words occur.

The second volume is devoted to the Bible. It deals with its composition as a whole, and more particularly with certain books, explanations of contents of difficult chapters, and the Aramaic translation of the Pentateuch and many biblical verses.

He begins with a long essay entitled *On the Literature of the Bible and Its Generation in Tradition*. In this, he lays the foundation of his views on the character of a number of biblical books, for they stem from his conception of that literature. He rejects the view of Wellhausen and his school regarding the various sources of which the Pentateuch is composed, and presents his own view, which resembles in part that of Kaufmann: he posits the existence, up to the return from their Babylonian exile, of a wide historical literature which included all forms, narratives relating to the history of the people in various periods and their vicissitudes, poems and songs glorifying the deeds and lives of great historical figures in the fields of religion and law, and of kings and prophets. In other words, these literary forms, resulting later in types of books, had an historical frame much wider than the one given in the present books of the Pentateuch. This literature consisted, of course, of different layers according to the periods. All layers were composed in fixed forms, but had several versions of the same content which contained changes, though based on one tradition.

Thus, he says that all the laws in the Books of the Pentateuch are based on old sources which go back to the time of Moses, and likewise the narratives there, but the changes in them are due to different current versions of the times. Similarly, the content of the historical books, from Joshua to 2 Kings, is a shortened or a selected version from a larger historical literature which contained many poems and religious songs and hymns. Even the prophetic books should not be considered as books written by the prophets themselves. All these books are taken from a literature about the lives of the prophets and their time—a literature which also included their prophecies or orations.

At the beginning of the Second Commonwealth, he says, writers selected from the larger historical literature all the parts which constitute the Pentateuch, both the narratives and the laws, so that they might organize the life of the people according to the commandments. Then they selected the poems, hymns of David and other poems written in his time, the poems about Solomon, and also some Wisdom writings by Solomon himself and of the other writers in his

period, as well as writings dealing with religious problems, as the Book of Job. Similarly, the prophecies and orations of the prophets, together with biographical data of their lives, were taken from this embrative literature. All these literary materials were arranged in separate sections—Torah, historical books, prophetic books, Psalms, scrolls, and proverbs.

I doubt whether this theory in regard to the Pentateuch and to the prophetic books can be accepted even from a non-traditional view, for it is too ethereal. No time of composition nor names of composers of the versions of those writings are given. It certainly does not come close to the traditional view in any way, despite the conservative note of positing documents from Mosaic times. In addition, concerning the prophets, we have statements in Jeremiah, XXXVI:18, 21, 28, that he himself had dictated his prophecies to his disciple, Baruch, and most likely other prophets did the same.

The case is different with the Hagiographa. His view that most of the Psalms were composed by David and by poets in his time on various occasions and events in his life is plausible. The tradition of a people expressed in the designation of more than half of the Psalms by the title, "To David," and many other Psalms ascribed to singers who lived in his time, cannot be dismissed lightly. That the Book of Psalms also contains songs of a much later period, as is evident, in Psalm CXXXVII, can be safely subscribed to.

Similarly plausible are his views of the Books of Proverbs, Canticles, and Kohelet, which he ascribes to the time of Solomon, and even parts of Proverbs to Solomon himself. He admits that the style and language of Canticles and Kohelet bear evidence of later usage of some words. But, says he, that does not contradict their ascription to the time of Solomon. The earlier versions were reworked by later writers.

The third volume of Tur Sinai's work is divided into four sections. First, the symbolic significance of the Holy Ark (the Aron), its cover (*Kaporeth*), the Cherubim standing on it, and its effect on Jewish beliefs in early times. The discussion is a wide one, and it is divided into a number of chapters dealing with various concepts concerning the relation of God to the world imbedded in a number of biblical terms and verses which speak of the Ark and its parts. The meaning of these verses and terms are, on the whole, interpreted in a manner which differs from the one followed by the commentators through the ages.



The second section is devoted to the discussion of a number of beliefs and views in the biblical period, such as the function of the *Urim we-Tumim* worn by the high priest and used as a means to ascertain the will of God; the concept underlying the name *Shaddai* applied in the Bible to God; the meaning of certain oaths, and also of several religious rites.

The third deals with the conception of the world, its parts and phenomena as reflected in the biblical view. He includes in it an essay on the origin of the Sabbath in which he rejects the theories of many biblical critics who attempt to find parallels to this institution in Babylonian and Assyrian religion. He proves its Jewish origin by showing that it could not have been conceived otherwise than through the biblical view of the creation, which posits six days of work and a seventh for rest.

The fourth section explains a number of terms and phrases in the language of the Talmud and Midrash, the meaning of which is not entirely clear and includes several solutions of riddles.

As for his discussions of certain concepts of beliefs and their symbols, while he opposes the views of biblical critics, he injects in his explanations of biblical verses and terms mythological aspects of his own, and at times his suppositions are far-fetched and contain much exaggeration. That the volumes display scholarship and erudition is quite evident.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TALMUDICS AND RABBINICS

#### 35. TALMUDICS

A leading work in the field of Talmudic studies is *Mobo le-Safrut ha-Tannaim* (An Introduction to Tannaitic Literature) by Jacob Nahum Epstein, the late professor of Talmud at the Hebrew University. The work contains introductions to the three divisions of Tannaitic literature; the Mishnah, of which Judah the Prince was the redactor; the *Tosefta*, and the three Tannaitic Midrashim. In these introductions, the author traces the various attempts at the arrangement of these works from their beginning to their final editions.

In regard to the Mishnah, Dr. Epstein posits that some of its parts or groups of Halakoth dealing with certain subjects had already been organized during the last century of the existence of the Second Temple, and maybe even earlier. In fact, our Mishnah speaks frequently of a *Mishnah Rishonah*, i.e., a first version of Halakic statements with which the later Tannaim differed. Besides, the Talmud itself states that the two tractates, *Midot* and *Tamid* were composed by Tannaim who lived before the destruction of the Temple. The composition of the first tractate, which gives a complete plan of the Temple building and the dimension of its parts, is ascribed to Eliezer ben Yacob, the elder, and the second tractate, which describes the order and the way the sacrifices were offered, is ascribed to Simon Ish ha-Mizpeh, an officer of the Temple.

In addition, our author points out numerous sections in a number of other tractates which hail from Temple times. Most of these sections deal with laws and forms of worship which could be carried out only in Temple times, and the Mishnot bear the evidence of the time of this composition. In one Mishnah, in the tractate *Shkalim* which deals with the payment of the annual contribution of a shekel to the Temple by every Jew in the world, the names of a number of

officers of the Temple are listed. In another Mishnah, in the tractate *Bikkurim* dealing with the offering of the first fruits, there is a description of how King Agrippa the Second performed that offering.

Epstein also provides sufficient evidence to prove that the entire tractate *Sota*, which discusses at length the ordeal given in the Temple to the woman suspected by her husband of adultery, as well as the way in which certain other precepts which were practiced only during the existence of the Temple are to be observed, is taken from a collection of Mishnoth by Johanan ben Zakkai, the leading disciple of Hillel. Traces of early collections of Mishnot are also found by him in a number of other tractates.

Turning to collections of groups of Mishnot by Tannaim, whose activity took place in the period immediately following the destruction of the Temple, he comes to the conclusion that both Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah and Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, disciples of Johanan ben Zakkai, made collections of groups of Mishnoth. As for Rabbi Akiba, one can say that he is really the father of a complete Mishnah which is the very foundation of the final edition of the Mishnah by Judah the Prince. Akiba's Mishnah is mentioned numerous times in our Mishnah in the statements of his disciples. In fact, he is the architect of the entire Tannaitic literature, for the origin of all its parts are traced to him.

Yet, in spite of Akiba's greatness and authority, says Epstein, the work was not completed for there were differences of opinion and various traditions, and the work of organization was still continued, primarily by the students of Akiba who compiled their own versions. The best of these students' Mishnah versions is by Rabbi Meir who, following Akiba's version, compiled a more complete Mishnah with many additions. In fact, it is stated in the Talmud that most anonymous statements in our Mishnah are taken from the Mishnah of Rabbi Meir. We also know that Rabbi Simeon ben Yochai compiled a Mishnah which is an abbreviation of that of Akiba. The other three disciples, Rabbi Judah ben Ihlaye, Rabbi José, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Shamua, also compiled orders of Mishnoth, but with distinct differences. Judah was greatly influenced by the views of his father's teacher, Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, and also by those of Rabbi Tarfon, his own teacher. Their views are therefore in evidence in Judah's statements. José, who had another teacher in addition to Akiba, namely Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri, frequently follows that scholar's view.

Eliezer ben Shamua also had his own Mishnah in which he voices different views than those of his colleagues.

These collections form, according to our author, the frame of Tannaitic literary activity in their endeavors to organize the large numbers of Halakic statements into order and system. It was upon this frame and with its elements that Judah the Prince and a committee of colleagues edited the Mishnah which henceforth became the standard text of study. He also pointed out the final Halakic decision by stating the accepted statements anonymously. Epstein treats the subject in detail. He shows the role which all these earlier attempts at collecting groups of Halakot and widening their content played in the construction of the Mishnah edited by Judah the Prince. He devotes special chapters to each version of the Mishnah prepared by the disciples of Akiba and indicates the amount borrowed from each. He finds that not only was Rabbi Meir's Mishnah utilized to a great extent, as stated, but that whole chapters in many tractates were taken from the versions of the other disciples and a larger number of parts of chapters were similarly borrowed.

A large part of Epstein's work is devoted to special introductions to eighteen individual tractates of the Mishnah. In these the author gives a short but embracive analysis of the contents of the tractates, the subjects they deal with, and points out parallels to some views or laws discussed in these tractates in extra-Talmudic Jewish sources, such as certain papyri, or in works of Philo. He also indicates the basis of a number of Halakot in the interpretation of Biblical verses or Midrash.

In the lengthy introductions to the *Tosefta* and the Tannaitic Midrashim, Dr. Epstein follows the same method as in the introduction to the Mishnah, which helps the students to a better understanding of the character of these great works. Space, however, does not allow any further summarization. The views and theories of a larger part of the *Mebo* presented in the preceding lines prove sufficiently the great value of this work for Jewish learning.

### 36. RABBINICS

That part of Rabbinic literature known as *Tosofot*, which like Rashi's commentary forms an integral part of the study of the Talmud and to which generations of students devoted themselves from their early youth, delving into its depths, finally found its historian in A. A. Urbach, author of *Baalé ha-Tosofot* (Masters of the *Toso-*

*fot*). Many scholars during the last century wrote on the *Tosofot* and their composers, but none of them succeeded in presenting a complete history of this great literary production which continued in Northern France and Germany for two and a half centuries, from the beginning of the twelfth century to the middle of the fourteenth, as Urbach.

The work, though, contains much more than its name implies. It is really not only a history of the *Tosofot* and their composers, but a history of the intellectual and literary activity in France and Germany during these two and a half centuries. This is due to the very nature of the activity and to the spiritual life of the Jewries of these countries at that period. The center of that life, as is well known, was the Talmud, around which all intellectual efforts were grouped. When Rashi in his great commentary freed a large quantity of intellectual energy hitherto spent in ascertaining the meaning of the Talmud, that energy was employed in the composition of the *Tosofot* by the leading scholars. These *Tosofot*, as pointed out, in our survey (Volume I, pp. 145, 146) include comments on the Talmud, super-commentaries on commentaries, and discussion and analysis of the contents of sections of that work. In short, the *Tosofot* present a wide and embracing activity, for, in addition, it includes decisions on points of law, inasmuch as such decisions depend on the right interpretation of the Talmud as well as the conclusions drawn by interpreters in earlier times. As a result, there was hardly a scholar in those times who did not write *Tosofot*. Even those who devoted themselves to the composition of codes employ frequently comments and discussions of Talmudic statements as proofs for their decisions.

These scholars were not only men of learning but the leaders of their generations who were deeply interested in the affairs of the communities, and their activities extended to decreeing ordinances for improving many phases of Jewish social life. Similarly, many of them were religious poets, *Paitanim*, and gave vent to the spirit of the nation in their compositions, echoing its heartrending cries to God for its suffering as well as its hopes for the promised redemption. Others delved in mysticism and conducted themselves with extreme piety. These were known as Hassidim.

The work as a whole is divided into two unequal parts. After two introductory chapters giving a general survey of the state of learning in France at the time, and the beginning of the *Tosafists'* activity, the author devotes the following eight chapters to the description of the

literary production and activities of the heads of several schools of *Tosafists*. These chapters include not only the ramified scholastic activity as well as the effects of the leadership of the heads of the schools in the communities, but also a detailed account of the works of the disciples and of all the other outstanding savants of the generation.

Of the eight chapters, two are devoted to Jacob Tam (1096-1171), a grandson of Rashi, the leading and the most influential *Tosafist*, and to his disciples. The other four chapters deal respectively with Isaac ben Shemuel, known briefly as the *Ri*, i.e., Rabénu Yitzhak, and his school at Dampierre; Rabbi Simon of Sens and his followers; Rabbi Yehiel of Paris; and Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg and his group. The last two chapters of this part are devoted to surveying the intellectual and spiritual activity of a large number of scholars in Germany, all of whom can be classified either as *Tosafists* or as their disciples, as a number of them wrote codes in which the views and the legal decisions of the *Tosafists* were incorporated.

As stated, the treatment of the material by the author is all-embracing, and practically no scholar of importance is missing from the account. In fact, each chapter can be considered a monograph on a phase of this extensive literary activity, or on an outstanding scholar of the period. In the case of the latter, all facets of their activities and personalities are presented in detail. Of special value in these chapters are the efforts to trace the influence of conditions of the environment upon Jewish life in all its aspects, the communal organization, and the intellectual and spiritual status. The legal ordinances and the spiritual tendencies are better understood in the light of that influence.

The second part consists only of three chapters, but each of them is an important contribution to literary history. Chapter XI deals with the editors of the various groups of *Tosofot*. Chapter XII discusses the *Tosofot* on each of the tractates of the Talmud which the author calls *Our Tosofot*, for they are printed together with the text of the Talmud, and thus have formed the subject of study through the generations. These *Tosofot* are discussed in detail, their editors and the school from which they emanated are given, and proofs for the assumptions of the author offered.

The closing chapter outlines the methods of study of the *Tosafists*, their attitudes to Rashi's commentary, their critical approach to the text of the Talmud, and the use of extra-Talmudic sources. Much

energy and effort were spent by the author in the writing of this work which took, according to his testimony, twenty-two years, but the result is a permanent contribution to a literature which molded the intellect of generations of students.

## CHAPTER IX

### ARCHEOLOGY, HISTORY, AND BIOGRAPHY

#### 37. *ARCHEOLOGY*

Archeology constitutes a favorite subject of study and research in Israel, especially since the establishment of the State. Consequently, the production of works in this subject is considerable. However, most of these works are limited to a description of archeological discoveries in particular places, and only few deal with the subject in a wider manner. Of the few, the most embrative one is *Kadmoniut Arzenu* (The Archeology of Our Land) by Michael Abi Yona and Samuel Yewin. The book is divided into two parts. The first one is an extensive introduction, inasmuch as it offers a history of archeological studies in general, and in Israel in particular, and also describes the various archeological-historical periods, as well as the archeologist at work. The second part deals with the actual results brought forth by archeological efforts.

Of interest in the first part is the story of the discovery in 1868 of the Stone of Meshah, King of Moab, by the German missionary, Klein, the inscription of which tells of his war with the King of Israel, Yehoram, son of Ahab. When the French archeologist, Clermont Ganeau, heard about it, he rushed to the place and made an impression of the inscription. The stone itself was later broken by the Bedouins, but the impression saved the major part of the inscription.

The second part is subdivided into three sections, the first of which deals with the unearthing of the remains of settlements and houses up to the Hellenistic period, and also of structures from the Greek-Roman period, including the Byzantine epoch; the second deals with places of worship of all kinds, temples, synagogues, and churches, from earliest times to the conquest by the Arabs in 638; the third deals with fortresses. We learn that the earliest vestiges of human



habitation in Palestine, or Israel, go back to the Neolithic period (7500-4000 B.C.E.). Garstang's diggings in Jericho uncovered remnants of buildings, built in square form, belonging to that span of time. Numerous remains of buildings in settlements of later periods, such as the Chalcolithic (copper, 4000-3000), and the three bronze periods (3000-1500) were found in many parts of the land. These display the effects of the higher states of civilization of the builders. There are fire-places in the houses, and in some, even primitive forms of lavatories.

With the twelfth century B.C.E., there begins the Israeli period. Then there appear houses of better construction; these are divided into rooms and possibly had a wide porch, as there are foundations for the pillars which supported it. The time of the earliest of such buildings, which were found in Meggido, the authors assume to have been at the end of the Period of the Judges. Of the finds belonging to the later periods, especially distinguished are the buildings in Meggido, which date from the time of Solomon, among which stand the stables of which eighteen were unearthed, each one having place for twenty-four to thirty horses. Also imposing are the remains of the palaces of Ahab in Samaria, and those of the palaces of Lachish which date from the beginning of the sixth century B.C.E. The authors devote much space to the detailed description of the main buildings and those surrounding them, giving the plan of their structure, and the form of the utensils found within them.

The same method is applied to the Hellenistic-Roman period, in which the plan of the cities is delineated and private homes described. It is pointed out that the houses of the wealthy were divided into separate parts, one for men and one for women, each one surrounded by a courtyard. Great attention is given by the authors to the structure of public buildings, especially to amusement places, such as theaters, amphitheaters, and hippodromes which are described in all their particulars, even the successive changes in their structure evident in the ruins found in many places.

Coming to the section dealing with places of worship, much space is devoted by the authors to pagan temples and, later, to Christian Churches, of which numerous ruins are found throughout Palestine. These are described in all their variations. Turning to the Jewish aspect, the authors express surprise that there are no remains of Israeli places of worship during the entire long period, extending from their entry into Canaan to 586, the end of the First Commonwealth.

True, it is small wonder, say they, that no remains of the First Temple at Jerusalem have been found, for from the seventh century C.E. a Moslem mosque has occupied the site, and no diggings can be undertaken. But that there is no trace of the numerous *Bomot* (high places) and the several Tabernacles mentioned in the Bible, is baffling.

There are a number of remains of synagogues from the first centuries C.E. However, while there are no remains of earlier synagogues, there is a Greek inscription on a marble tablet found in Jerusalem which tells us of a synagogue built in the time of the Temple, to which there was also attached a lodging place for poor people coming from other cities and countries to celebrate the holidays in Jerusalem. The structures of the synagogues are described at great length, and even their ornamentations are dealt with. In the older synagogues, the ornamentation was limited to mathematical drawings, but in the later ones, we find pictures of animals and birds, and of course, of the Menorah, Shofar, and Ethrog, and also leaves of various plants.

The last section discusses the fortresses of the land and their structure during the long period extending from the beginning of the First Bronze Period, 3000 B.C.E. to the conquest of the land by the Arabs. Thus, there pass before us in this work the changes of life in the land of Israel during thousands of years as expressed in the buildings of generations in a variety of forms of all types.

### 38. HISTORY

#### i. ISAAC BAER

Isaac Baer's work, *Yisrael be-Amim* (Israel Among the Nations), in spite of its general title, deals only with certain phases of the history of the Second Commonwealth, as well as with that of the following period of the Mishnah and Talmud. He believes that the latter period is mainly a continuation of the preceding one. The work consists of a series of discussions on the spiritual creativity of the periods. Baer believes that the proper understanding of the creativity of these periods will serve as a key to the understanding of the entire Jewish history, for says he, the concepts and ideals created during these periods were accepted by the entire Jewish people and were effective up to modern times. They constitute the essence of the inner Jewish world and can be designated as the world of Talmud and Rabbinic Judaism, or still better as that of normative Judaism.

His discussions and analyses of the spiritual and cultural activity

are, on the whole, embrative and instructive, but, to a degree, narrowed by the peculiarity of his point of view. He assumes that the contact of the Jews with Hellenic culture, which had already begun during the third century B.C.E., when Judea came under the rule of the Ptolemaic dynasty, served as a stimulus for great spiritual activity. Again, he characterizes the period as exceptionally spiritual, and to a large degree even ascetic, that is, possessing a mystical approach to the world and life. As a result, he begins the analysis of the spiritual awakening not with the activities of Ezra and Nehemiah and their followers, the scribes, but with the activity of a group of pious scholars (*Hassidim*) in the third century B.C.E. He names them *Hassidim ha-Rishonim* (The Early Pious Men), a term borrowed from the Mishnah, which hardly relates the importance he ascribes to that title. He says the group of early pious scholars (*Hassidim ha-Kadmonim*) constituted the center and the staying power of the nation in that period. True to his view that the contact with the Hellenic culture was the great factor in stimulating the exceptional spiritual and moral activity of the Jews, he even attributes the very rise of the *Hassid Hakam* (Pious Scholar)—an entirely new combination in Jewish literature—to that contact, and says, "He came into being through the meeting of the prophetic tradition with Hellenic culture."

From such views follow his excessive emphasis on Greek influence in various phases of Jewish spirituality of the period. To every subject discussed, whether it is the institution of prayer and its character, or that of the Sanhedrin, or the study of Torah as a means of self-perfection, or contentment with little in life, he always finds parallels in Greek thought and assumes that this influence served as a stimulus. He does not, however, deny Jewish originality and asserts that whatever was borrowed was changed completely by the Jewish spirit, but the stimulus was there.

As for the approach to the world and life, which he believes was developed during this period, he asserts that its foundation was the view that the earthly world was only a reflection of the upper or the heavenly one. Out of this there followed the view of human life and of historic process. The soul descends from the world above and thither it returns by means of a process of self perfection through moral and religious action.

Isaac Baer contends that there is a similar process in history which

embraces all humanity; but in the center of it stands Israel. It began with the selection of the Patriarchs, and then with the people of Israel, to bring about a continual rise in religion and morality until it will end ultimately, in Messianic times. From this point of view he attempts to explain many phases of Rabbinic law and ordinances and exotic beliefs, usually found in Cabalistic teachings. But, according to Baer, they are the core of the inner Jewish world which was formed during the period. As a basis for his interpretation, he quotes numerous Agadic and Mishnaic passages and the works of Philo, claiming that the latter's views are derived from old Midrashim.

It is very difficult to accept Baer's interpretation of the spiritual phase of Jewish life during the second Commonwealth. On the whole, his interpretation ignores the views of the Pharisees, the leading Jewish group of the time, and the great activity of their leaders. To a large extent, he relies upon homiletic statements found in Talmudic and Midrashic literature. Yet, when he comes to the period of the Mishnah, he admits that a more positive and realistic spirit prevailed at that time. In reality, the same spirit prevailed even before, during the time of the Second Commonwealth, in the works and views of the generations of scholars who had molded Judaism. The mystic views which he posits as the genesis of the Jewish approach to the world and life are, primarily, only peripheral influences. They are primarily found in the Apocalyptic books and, later, in the Cabala, but not in the wide stream of Jewish spiritual and literary activity of this period, the essence of which was embodied in the Mishnah. Baer's work, despite his unacceptable conclusions, is executed with erudition and skill.

## ii. AVIGDOR ZERIKOWER

A historic work shedding light on certain aspects of Jewish history during the Hellenistic Period is *ha-Yehudim we-ha-Yewonim be-Tekufah ha-Hellenistit* (The Jews and the Greeks in the Hellenistic Period) by Avigdor Zerikower. The long introduction deals with the general history of the period, including the life of Alexander the Great, his Empire, and the rise of Hellenistic kingdoms after his death (especially the Selucidian or the Syrian, and the Ptolemean or the Egyptian, which had ruled successively over Judea). It also briefly discusses the character and the political status of the Greek cities established in Oriental countries, as well as on the coast of

Palestine and in Transjordan, and surveys the political history in Judea up to the time of Antiochus Epiphanus when the struggle began between the Greeks and the Jews.

The author then turns to the main object of his study, the delineation of the relation, in its several aspects, between the Jews and the Greeks, first in Judea to the end of the Hasmonean dynasty, and then in the Diaspora. He begins the discussion of his subject with a question. What were the features which brought about the rise of a Hellenistic party among the Jews? He rejects the view, often expressed, that it was due to the attraction which Greek culture or certain forms of Greek life exerted upon the Jews. He admits the exertion of a degree of influence, for we see that even in the later days of the Hasmonean period, several kings adopted some Greek forms of life, but he claims that this could not be the principal factor for the rise of the party. He posits that it was primarily a desire to broaden the social and political horizons of life which had originated within one family, and later spread to the other members of the higher social stratum of Palestine Jewry.

To buttress his view, he discusses at length the life of Joseph ben Tubiah, founder of the group known as *Bené Tubiah* (Sons of Tubiah) who constituted the leading element of the Hellenist party. He shows, using as proof several Greek papyri in the archives of Zenon (a high official in the Egyptian treasury) which refer to Tubiah, father of Joseph, that Tubiah was a kind of feudal lord in the land of Amman, with a cavalry regiment in his service and many tenants on his estates, who corresponded with Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt (285-247 B.C.E.). It is no wonder then that his son, who was the tax collector of the province of Coelo-Syria (which included Judea and all Greek cities within the province), strove to conduct himself as a man of might, imposing his will on all, and adopting the wider form of Greek life which suited such a position. He and his family, as we learn from Josephus, laid the foundation of a Hellenized life in Judea. Soon the family was joined by other men of wealth and power who found participation in the life of the greater world more convenient for their purpose; among them were ambitious priests, and in this way, a party arose.

The story of the struggle which followed the victory of the Maccabees and the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty are well known, and Zerikower adds little to it. He contributes, however, several points of interest to the history of the period. The first is an explanation for

the request made by Jason (brother of the high priest, Honyo, and later himself a high priest) of Antiochus Epiphanus to turn Jerusalem into a Greek city, or *Polis*, to be called Antioch. He attributes such a strange request to primarily economic considerations. The Hellenist party consisting of men of wealth and leaders in commerce who wished to turn Jerusalem into a commercial center. This could not be done unless it received the status of a Greek *Polis* which had the right to coin its own money, in addition to other privileges, all of which would facilitate commercialization.

Zerikower also attempts to prove that the desire for religious freedom was not the only factor inciting the Maccabean rebellion, but that there were two more. Even in the first years of rebellion, there was a desire in the hearts of the leaders and the people that followed them not only to obtain religious freedom, but to free Judea from foreign rule and make it an independent nation. True, says he, the extreme Hassidim were satisfied with the annulment of edicts against the practice of their religion, and after these were revoked, withdrew from the army, but the majority of the people remained with the leaders. Another factor was social, the opposition of the broad masses of the people to the wealthy and arrogant members of the Hellenist party.

The third point of interest is Zerikower's injection of a socio-economic factor in the opposition of the Pharisees to the rule of the later Hasmonean Kings—John Hyrkanos, Aristobolus, and Alexander Jannai. Following Aptowitzer, Zerikower says that the reason for the Pharisees' demand that Hyrkanos give up the office of high priest was not the one stated by Josephus and in the Talmud,\* namely that there was rumor of his mother's capture by the enemy, throwing suspicion on his pure priestly descent. There was also a stronger reason for the general opposition of the Pharisees to the Hasmonean rulers, of which this demand was only one expression. This was that the people at large, because of the wars, were bent under the yoke of heavy taxes, while on the other hand, a small number of the aristocracy were enriched by wars.

In the second part, devoted to the Diaspora, he surveys the various Jewish settlements in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor during the centuries of the Hellenistic period. On the whole, he adds little to what we know about settlements in Egypt. Of the first one we are told in

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\* Troctate Kiddushen, 66a.

Jeremiah XLIII and XLIV; of the second, the settlement during the Persian rule, we know from the elephantine papyri, discovered at the beginning of this century, and still later settlements are recorded in the history of Josephus and in the letter of Aristeas. The only new point which he makes is that the Jews served in the army of the Ptolemeans as mercenaries, like their brethren under Persian rule, and that they, like the former, were settled in military colonies and engaged in agriculture.

He then discusses at great length their political status as an ethnic group. They had full judicial autonomy, were free from many duties which would interfere with their religious practices, and had their communal organization legally recognized. They also had the right to collect money for the Temple in Jerusalem. He quotes many documents, including records from papyri recently discovered, which bear on various aspects of the life of Egyptian Jewry during this period. As to whether they enjoyed full citizenship in Egyptian cities, a subject under much discussion among scholars, he arrives at a negative conclusion. He feels that individuals might have been admitted to that status, but not the group. Their general status was higher than that of the native Egyptians, but lower than that of full citizens.

He also adds several details about their economic activities. Besides their engagement in agriculture, which were extensive, as they owned not only parcels of land but large estates as well, they were engaged in trade. The Talmud records that the large synagogue in Alexandria had compartments for groups, each of which was occupied by men engaged in a certain trade. Many Jews were also engaged in commerce, primarily in the import and export of grain (a number of these attained riches), and some Jews were active in government service.

In the final discussion, the author attempts to ascertain the rise of anti-Semitism in the lands of the Hellenistic Diaspora, for numerous Greek works, as that of Manetho and of Apion, which are well known, and others less known, prove that animosity toward the Jews was prevalent in certain sections of the population. He comes to the conclusion that the principal reason was the difference and distinction of the Jews from other groups of settlers. The latter accepted whatever rights the cities gave them and fulfilled all the duties. The Jews received special privileges from the kings, though not always from the cities, and were freed from many duties, and this aroused resentment. He quotes numerous documents to back his assertion.

iii. GEDALYAH ALON

Among the many historical works produced in Israel during the last twenty-five years, *Toldot ha-Yehudim be-Tekufat ha-Mishnah we-ha-Talmud* (History of the Jews in Palestine during the Period of the Mishnah and the Talmud) by Gedalyah Alon, deserves our attention. The work, judging by its title, was intended to embrace the history of the Jews in the land of Israel during the period extending from the year 70 C.E. to the conquest of the land by the Arabs in the years 636-640 C.E. In fact, the rather lengthy introduction devotes an entire chapter to the discussion of divisions in that span of time, which embraces about six hundred years. The plan, however, due to the early death of the author, was not carried out, and the work deals only with the short period of fifty-five years, from the destruction of the Temple to the war of Bar Kokba.

However, the quality of the work remains outstanding despite the short time covered. It is distinguished by the author's view of the role of the Palestinian center, at the time, in molding and shaping the character of Jewish history during the following millennia, by the embraciveness of the depiction of all phases of life, and through exceptional use of sources. These, though primarily drawn from the extensive Talmudic and Midrashic literature, include, to a great extent, non-Jewish sources.

In his introduction, intended for the longer period, Alon takes exception to the methods of Graetz and Dubnow in describing the period. The former limits himself to the spiritual and literary activity, and the latter emphasizes to excess, the ordinances and decrees of the Roman and Byzantine Emperors which aimed at separating Jewish life from their surrounding society.

He believes that during a large part of that period—the longer one—Palestinian Jewry occupied a middle position between an independent state and exile or Diaspora. In reality, says he, this period was a continuation of the period of the Second Commonwealth. According to him, it retained four of the elements of an independent state, namely: a relative majority of the Jewish population of Palestine, excluding the coastal cities; ownership of the soil of the land as well as its economic structure; an autonomous government of the inner life in all phases; and a center of influence on the scattered Diaspora Jewries.

He is quite aware of the losses caused by the destruction of the Temple and the State in all phases of life, especially that of owner-



ship of land, most of which was declared government land, yet he claims that immediately after the *Hurban* (the destruction of the Temple), the former owners came back to the land as tenants, paying taxes; and, similarly, trade and commerce were resumed and a Jewish life rooted in its own land came into being once more. Likewise, the spiritual, cultural, and social life of the communities were reorganized, and the central institutions, the High Court, the Sanhedrin, and the office of *Nasi* (Patriarch) were reestablished and began to discharge their functions. The seat of the Sanhedrin was changed from Jerusalem to Jamnia (Yabne), but its activity was not diminished, and on the contrary, greatly increased. All these things gave to that Jewry the status of a quasi-state and enabled it to play its great role in the life of world Jewry as well as impress it with a character which made it possible to survive as a national group.

Alon, therefore believes that the writing of its history should take in all aspects of that many-phased life. It is only then, says he, that we can value that life properly and appreciate its historical importance.

He carried out his task exceptionally well. His mastery of the sources and his historical sense enabled him to shed much light on a number of dark corners in the history of that period and to solve some problems which baffle historians. Thus, the report in a number of Talmudic and Midrashic sources that Johānnan ben Zakkai asked Vespasian to allow him to remove the Sanhedrin to Jamnia (Yabne), aroused wonder. Why should Johānnan ask for Jamnia when that city was, for a long time before the *Hurban*, a Hellenistic city with a majority of Gentile inhabitants? Alon first casts doubt upon the existence of that request, and quotes sources where the request is not mentioned. Then he proposes the following solution. Johānnan was sent to Jamnia by the Romans, together with many other Jews who left Jerusalem during the siege, to be held in custody. Gradually more Jews were gathered there, including many scholars who joined him in establishing the school and helped to lay the foundation of the central authoritative institution in the life of Palestinian Jewry, the Sanhedrin.

Alon devotes a chapter to the personality and activity of Johānnan, both of which are delineated in detail and with keen insight. He answers the moot question of the historians: did Johānnan act as the *Nasi* of the Sanhedrin or not, in the affirmative. He proves it by reference to the title *Rabban*, our master, given to him, a title which

was accorded to several earlier *Nesiim* of the Hillelite dynasty. The reason that Gamliel, the son of the last *Nasi*, did not assume the presidency immediately upon the refounding of the Sanhedrin was, according to his view, the opposition of the Roman government to his heading that institution, on account of the active participation of his father, Simon, in the war against the government. But when things quieted down, the Romans not only acquiesced to his assumption of the presidency, but gave full recognition to the Sanhedrin as the institution representing the Jewry of Palestine.

Much space is devoted by our author to the delineation of the activities of Gamliel and his colleagues as well as to the functions and activities of the Sanhedrin. He surveys the initiation of that institution during the period of the Second Commonwealth, and then describes in great detail its various functions, both as the great Academy of learning and as the highest court, and especially as the authoritative body governing Jewry in Palestine as well as in the Diaspora. He catalogs their ordinances and decrees, many of which molded the character of Judaism. From this description, much light is thrown on dark points in the history of the period. We know that the fixation of the calendar in all its phases, the declaration of the first days of the month, which regulated the time of the holidays, and the intercalation of certain years, adding a thirteenth month, was the prerogative of the Sanhedrin alone. When a certain scholar dared to intercalate a year in Babylonia, he was threatened with excommunication. Yet, we find that Akiba did the same thing, and, later, his disciple, Rabbi Meir.

Many scholars attempted to reconcile the contradictory reports. Alon says that such acts were carried out only at certain times for the purpose of strengthening the bond between the center in Palestine and the Jewries of the Diaspora. Leading scholars were then sent to visit these Jewries to teach them and encourage them in their devotion to Judaism. But when a scholar undertook this act without the sanction of the Sanhedrin, the action was protested.

Of special interest is the chapter on the economic structure of Palestine Jewry at the time. We learn that while the majority of that Jewry clung to agriculture, trade and commerce there flourished also. There was much export of wine which was highly valued in many countries. The linen cloth and the garments made from the cloth, both of which were manufactured in the city of Beth Shean, in Galilee, were famous in the Roman Empire. Alon quotes a number of

Roman and Greek writers who speak enthusiastically of the linen and the garments. We also learn of the existence of an association of tradesmen which regulated prices as well as trade, establishing days on which only one tradesman had the right to sell his goods in a certain place, etc.

The author offers reasons for two ordinances enacted by the Sanhedrin. The first is the decree prohibiting the raising of small cattle, namely goats and sheep. He says that the decree was aimed to protect the farmers and planters from the devastation these animals would cause in the fields of grain and to the fruit trees. It was especially necessary after the war of Bar Kokba, when trees were cut down and fields destroyed. Another decree, the one prohibiting the selling of land, houses, stores, and large cattle to Gentiles, also had an economic basis. It was aimed, he says, to prevent an increased settlement of Gentiles in the land, which would ultimately decrease the Jewish population.

Of great interest is the final chapter which forms a general survey of the spiritual and cultural atmosphere in the Palestinian Jewish world at that time. Alon describes the life of the scholars and students and their relation to one another. We learn that it was customary for students to come to the house of their teachers on the Sabbath and actually attend to their needs. Akiba tells of his Sabbaths in the homes of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua, where he kneaded dough for them on Friday, preparing it for baking. During these visits they learned many Halakot. We also know of the love of the students for Torah, that they were satisfied with very little in order to gain knowledge. The great Akiba hewed wood and sold a bundle of it daily so that he could study. Finally, we are presented with a sketch of the theological views and the moral ideas and ideals taught by the scholars, which emphasize the love of Torah, love of God, and the love of man.

The author thus carried out his task and gave us a complete presentation of the life of that period, which helps us to better understand the following eras in Jewish history.

#### iv. SAMUEL YEVIN

Samuel Yevin's work, *Milhamot Bar Kokba* (The Wars of Bar Kokba), is a distinct contribution to a more thorough evaluation of that important episode in Jewish history, the last stand of the Jews against the Romans. He devotes the first chapter to a survey of Jew-

ish life in Palestine during the short period of forty-seven years which elapsed from the destruction of the Temple and the fall of the State to Hadrian's accession to emperorship in the year 117 C.E.

Of interest is the author's assertion that the War for Independence in the years 67-70 C.E., did not cause the amount of desolation which some historians attribute to it. With the exception of Jerusalem and a number of important cities, most towns were not destroyed, though a number of their inhabitants were killed. The destruction affected the villages even less, and still less their population, for large numbers of Jews fled the villages during the war, and returned to their homes after it and continued to till the land. The author believes that even in Jerusalem a small Jewish settlement existed within a few years after its destruction. As a result, it did not take long before Jewish life in Palestine reestablished a degree of normalcy.

Nor did the striving for independence entirely vanish from the hearts of the Jews. Yevin believes that during the years 115-117 C.E., when the Jewish uprising took place in many parts of the Roman Empire—Lybia, Cyrenaica, Egypt, and the Island of Cyprus—there were also attempts at rebellion in Palestine, but this cannot be established precisely.

In the second chapter, the author deals with the rise of the great Bar Kokba rebellion. He attempts to determine its causes. The usual theory of historians is that Hadrian promised to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple and then changed his mind, and the disappointment enraged the Jews. The author questions the promise to rebuild the Temple, but accepts the order of the Emperor to rebuild Jerusalem. This was in accordance with the policy he adopted to restore many destroyed cities in various parts of the Empire. The Jews, however, who could not imagine Jerusalem without a Temple, hoped for its rebuilding. But when the city was about to be restored, the procurator, Tinius Rufus, who is called in the Talmud, Tyranus Rufus, ordered, according to Roman pagan custom, the plowing of the soil. The Jews were now not only certain of the Emperor's intention to rebuild it as a pagan city, but were reminded of the prophecy, "Zion shall be plowed as a field" (Jeremiah, VI:18), and the restrained sentiment broke into a fury.

In a third chapter, Yevin tries to give some data about the leader of that rebellion, Simon Bar Kokba. The Jewish sources call him Bar Kusibah, and on the other hand, Roman and Christian sources, Bar Kokba. Some scholars explain the name Kokba to mean a star, based

on a statement in the Talmud that Akiba gave him that name quoting the verse, "There shall step forth a star from Jacob" (Numbers, XXIV: 17), for he considered him the Messiah. Most likely the Christian writers heard that name applied to Simon by some Jews and accepted it. As for the name Kusibah, scholars derive it from *Kozob*, a lie, and say that he was named so because the hope he aroused ended in failure and destruction. Yevin assumes that he called himself Bar Kokba after his birth-place, Kokba, in Judea. He buttresses his view by the fact that we know, according to sources, that in this place there were families who considered themselves of Davidic descent, and most likely he thought that he too was one of the descendants, a belief which strengthened his courage.

In the fourth chapter, the author discusses the process of the war and the short rule of Bar Kokba in detail, touching upon the conquest of Jerusalem, the offering of sacrifices on the Temple Mount, as well as the coins issued by Bar Kokba, of which there are seventeen kinds. He rejects the view of Büchler, who claims that the war was limited only to Judea and did not extend to Galilee, and asserts that it was fought in all parts of the land. The final act, the siege of *Betar*, is described by the author at great length, including a sketch of the topographic position of the city and the structure of the fortress.

Of special value is the appendix giving all the sources dealing with the war, its leaders, the fall, and its disastrous results. The last includes both Talmudic-Midrashic and various non-Jewish sources drawn from Roman historians and from the writings of a number of the Church Fathers. The work is as complete as is possible.

#### V. MICHAEL ABI YONA

A work which sheds much light upon the history of the Jews in Palestine during the four-hundred-year-period from the end of the revolt of Bar Kokba to the conquest of the land by the Arabs, is, *Bimé Roma u-Byzantium* (In the Days of Rome and Byzantium) by Michael Abi Yona. Although the subtitle designates the work as a political history of the Jews of Eretz Yisrael during that period, it contains much more than that, for it discusses a number of other phases of Jewish life, and provides numerous details which other historians failed to notice, and in that consists its value. We find a number of interesting points in the first chapter devoted to the description of the state of the Jews after the suppression of the rebellion, and their endeavor to restore normal life.

The author says that while the destruction of a number of Jewish settlements was a complete one, for at least seventy-five of such settlements were wiped out during the war, there is reason to assume that most of Palestine was still settled by Jews. Galilee, the southern part of the land, and even Judea, with the exception of Jerusalem and its environs, were in Jewish hands. He estimates the Jewish population at the time to have been between seven hundred and eight hundred thousand. That a number of Jews had emigrated after the war is, of course, understandable, and he therefore emphasizes the special endeavors by the leaders, the Patriarch and the members of the Sanhedrin to restrain that tendency in order to increase the population. He points to ordinances recorded in the Talmud prohibiting the export of food from Eretz Yisrael to other lands, or empowering the court to force either partner of a married couple to accept the will of one of them to settle in Palestine, as well as many other ordinances. Abi Yona also surveys the economic and spiritual life of the Palestinian Jewry in the first decades after the war.

Turning to the political situation, he dwells first on the span of time from 140-200 C.E., which he calls the period of reconciliation between the Romans and the Jews. The dynasty of the Antonines was anxious to have peace in the land and therefore allowed the Jews to maintain their rights and privileges, such as judicial autonomy and the administration of their inner life. They also supported the authority of the Sanhedrin and its president, the Patriarch, giving it official recognition. The relation of one of the Antonines to Judah the Prince is made much of in Talmudic literature. He believes that the Antonius spoken of in the Talmud as the friend of Judah the Prince, was Antonius Caracala (emperor from 206 to 217), who was known as a friend of the Jews. He visited Palestine in 199, and again later, and during his visits he came in contact with Judah. Of interest is the author's view that one of the causes of the reconciliation on the part of the Romans with the Jews is the respect for the heroism of the Jewish armies in the Bar Kokba war, which impressed the world.

The survey of events in the third century contains a number of points of interest. That century was, on the whole, one of crisis in the Roman Empire in both the political and the economic aspects. There was a continual change of emperors, and their number in the short span of a century reached forty-eight. The bad economic situation brought about an increase of taxes and various imposts. All these had a deteriorating effect upon Palestine Jewry. The author points,

therefore, to a large decrease, during the third century of the Jewish population in various parts of the country which reached such a degree that in Galilee its number was only one half of the number after the war of Bar Kokba, while in other parts of the country it went down to one quarter of the Jewish population at that time.

The situation of the Jews in Palestine under the Christian rule is depicted by Abi Yona in great detail, enumerating the various repressive measures against the Jews taken by the Emperors. Of these, there were the prohibitions to own Christian slaves, to convert even partially pagan slaves, or the attempt to convert a free pagan to Judaism. Such acts were threatened with severe punishment. Other edicts prohibited the Jews even to visit Jerusalem except on the ninth of Ab, or to build new synagogues. The judicial autonomy, however, was maintained, and office of the *Nasi*, president of the Sanhedrin, was still given full recognition.

Yet, says the author, in spite of all these repressions, the Jews in Eretz Yisrael still possessed a spirit of independence, and when the Emperor Galus attempted to make the yoke of subjection heavier, a revolt broke out in the year 351 C.E. It began in Sephoris and extended to Tiberias and other places. It was soon put down by the Roman General, Ursinus. On the whole, with the exception of the wiping out of Jewish settlements in a number of villages, the revolt did not greatly affect the Jewish situation.

The author devotes much space to the description of the attempt by the Emperor Julian the Apostate, to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem as a Jewish city in the years 361-363 C.E. He offers a number of reasons for such action, the chief of which was Julian's strong animosity toward Christianity, whereas he considered the Jews, to a degree, as allies. The rebuilding began in April, 363 C.E., but as is known, it was stopped by a fire which broke out in a tunnel and destroyed the foundation. The Christians saw in that a miracle, but our author ascribes it to a local earthquake. However, the death of Julian in June of that year made an end to that attempt.

Several chapters in the book depict the situation in the fifth and sixth centuries. On the whole, it grew worse; edict after edict was issued against the Jews, and in the year 429, the Patriarchate was abolished. Gradually, the Christian population increased until they became a majority in the land. Yet, says our author, the Jews held their own. Synagogues unearthed in various places proved by the style of the buildings, their ornaments and inscriptions dedicated to

the donors, that the economic situation of the Jews in these centuries was, on the whole, good. The author's estimate of the population at the end of the sixth century, is between one hundred fifty to two hundred thousand. He bases it on the estimate by a contemporary that the Jews participated in the Persian War with Heraclius, in the years 614-616, with twenty thousand soldiers. That number affords us a possible estimate of the entire population. In this war, the Jews were, for a time, allowed to rule Jerusalem, but it was of short duration. The Persian General changed his mind and drove the Jews out, and soon even the Persians were driven out. The Jews paid heavily for the few happy years they enjoyed, for many of them were killed. A few years later, the Arabs conquered the country, and the rule of Byzantium was at an end.

This work is especially distinguished by skillful use of Jewish sources which shed much light on the history of the period.

### 39. HISTORY OF JEWRIES

#### i. BEN ZION LURIA

Ben Zion Luria's work, *ha-Yehudim be-Suria be-Yemé Shivat Zion, ha-Mishnah we-ha-Talmud* (Jews in Syria in the Days of the Return from Babylonian Exile, The Mishnah and the Talmud) is a comprehensive history of Syrian Jewry during a thousand-year period. In his general survey of the Jewish Diaspora, he asserts that as early as the time of the return from the Babylonian exile there was a considerable Jewish settlement in Syria. He bases his assertions on Josephus who, in quoting the epistle of Artaxerxes to Ezra (Ezra, VIII:25), empowering him to appoint judges for Jews living in *Bavar Nabara*, translates the two words, not as "beyond the river," i.e., the Euphrates, but "in all Syria and Phoenicia." He also claims that Jews emigrated thither, even in later times, directly from Babylonia, pointing to a Syrian village by the name of *Kfar ha-Babli* (The Village of the Babylonians) mentioned in the Mishnah, and this village is still called Babliah.

As for the period of the Second Commonwealth, the relations between Judea and Syria bear sufficient evidence for the extensive Jewish penetration into that country. Aristobolus, son of John Hyrkanos, conquered Ituria, a part of Syria, and forced the inhabitants to embrace Judaism. Herod the Second, a brother of Agrippa the First, ruled over Chalkis, a section of Syria, and when he was exiled, the Emperor Claudius turned it over to Agrippa the Second. From time



to time, various groups of Jews, for one reason or another, left Judea and settled in Syria. Thus we know that a part of a Jewish sect, whose views and ways of life resembled that of the Essenes, left Judea in the time of Alexander Jannai and settled in Damascus. They left a work known as the *Brith Damesek* (The Covenant Or Bond of Damascus).

The author also dwells on the influence the Jews exerted on the Syrians in attracting them to Judaism. Luria quotes Josephus who tells that, at the time of the war with the Romans, the Syrians of Damascus had endeavored to conceal from their own wives their planned attack on the Jews because almost all of them were addicted to Judaism. From all this it can be assumed that the number of Jews who lived in Syria during that time was large. In fact, the author estimates it to have been a million. He says that scholars have calculated on the basis of a census taken in the provinces of Asia Minor and Syria a short time before the destruction of the Jewish State, that the number of Jews in both countries must have been a million and a half. And he argues that since Syria had more large cities than Asia Minor, it is right to conclude that two-thirds of that figure resided in Syria.

He then turns to discuss the Jewish settlements in many Syrian cities and the vicissitudes they had undergone there. In these discussions there are a number of points which were not touched upon by other historians. In regard to Antioch, the capital of Syria, he mentions that the events related in the story about Hannah and her seven sons, most likely took place in Antioch. A tradition prevailed there, not only among the Jews, but among the Gentiles as well, to that effect. A memorial day for these saints was held there annually for centuries, and during the fourth century, a view prevailed that the grave of the children was located in the Jewish section of the city near the synagogue.

Of interest are his discussions about Tyre, Sidon, and several other cities. He quotes numerous statements from the Talmud, showing that a number of later Tannaim used to transact business in Tyre, especially in silk. A generation later, during the first half of the third century C.E., a number of leading scholars, who are frequently quoted in the Talmud, had settled in that city and continued to carry on legal discussions from their place of residence with the authorities in Galilee, and as a result, Tyre became a center of learn-

ing. Greater scholarly activity was carried on in Siddon even earlier. We are told in the Mishnah and the Tosefta of the frequent visits to that city by Simon ben Yohai and José, disciples of Akiba; and it is also mentioned that these two scholars worked there for a time in a tannery. The Mishnah quotes many Halakic discussions between the scholars (Hakomim) of Siddon and leading Tannaim. This activity continued during the generations of Amoraim.

Luria continues to trace Jewish activities during the entire Talmudic period including the cultivation of learning in a number of other Syrian cities, towns, and even villages, thus making the history complete.

A valuable feature of the work is the inclusion of many Greek and Aramaic inscriptions on the walls of synagogues and on tombstones. They contain several inscriptions from the city of Tadmur or Palmyra, a leading commercial center in ancient times. In one of these, from the year 259 C.E., thanks are given to the Jew, Julius (the owner of commercial caravans) in the name of the city council, for his munificent contribution toward the beautification of public buildings.

## ii. ISRAEL BEN ZEEB

Another history of a Jewry, the influence of which made itself felt in the world at large, is *ha-Yehudim be-Arab* (Jews in Arabia) by Israel ben Zeeb. The author, a good Arabist, well versed in Arabic literature, succeeded in presenting, in several hundred pages, a complete history of this ancient Jewish settlement from the earliest times to the end of the seventh century C.E. when most of the Jews were exiled from there by Mohammed.

He opens his work with a discussion on the time when this settlement began. His view is that the Jews began to settle in Arabia during the two centuries preceding the destruction of the Second Temple. They began to penetrate there from the Jewish settlements in Transjordan, and also from the settlements in the Negev which spread from Zoar (mentioned in Genesis, XIX:23) to Elat. In this stretch of country there was a large Jewish population as late as the fifth and sixth centuries of the Common Era. Late Tannaitic literature (Tosefta Shebiit, VII:15) mentions Zoar as a Jewish city, and that Rabbi Meir had visited one of the cities in the Negev. Around Elat and in the Tiran Islands, the Biblical Yotba, there was even a Jewish self-gov-

erning colony up to the time of the Emperor Justinian who exiled them from there.

The settlement of the Jews in Arabia spread to many places, Hejaz, Haibar, Yatrib, later Medinah, and the oasis Tema, mentioned in the Bible (Isaiah, 21). The settlement in and around Medinah was especially large in the time of Mohammed. It is figured that there were in that part of the country twenty communities which possessed seventy fortified places. These Jews were divided into three tribes, Bené Nadhir, Bené Kuraiza, and Bené Kainukaa who had alliances with Arab tribes settled nearby.

Their influence on the Arab tribes was great in many ways. First, economically, the Jews, according to Ben Zeeb, introduced the plow into Arabia, also certain plants and vegetables unknown to the natives, but of special importance was their commercial activity expressed in the establishment of market-places for importing and exporting goods. Their cultural and religious influence was very great.

The Arabic Jews, says the author, possessed a fair amount of Jewish learning. He rejects S. J. Rapoport's assertion that they were not acquainted with the Talmud and in support of his own view, he points to the fact that Mohammed quotes in the Koran many Mishnaic statements which, of course, he learned from Jewish scholars. The Arabs were thus greatly influenced by them, and it is possible that a large number of the Jews were Arab proselytes. But even those who did not embrace Judaism accepted many of the Jewish practices and beliefs. Ben Zeeb believes that the practice of circumcision, prevalent in Arabia before Mohammed, was in imitation of the Jews, and similarly current beliefs, such as that the Arabs were descended from Ishmael, the son of Abraham, were instilled into their minds by the Jews.

The language of the Jews was Arabic, but was written in Hebrew characters. The Jews also participated in whatever Arabic literature there was at the time, especially in poetry. The Jew, Samuel Ibn Adiya (500-560), a resident of Tema, was a distinguished Arabic poet. A definite proof of the embrative Jewish influence on the Arabs is the existence for a time in Yemen of a dynasty of kings who had embraced Judaism and were most likely followed by a large number of their people. Ben Zeeb quotes a number of recently discovered inscriptions in Yemen which refer to the life and activities of Joseph Du Nuas, the last king of the dynasty.

The author devotes a large part of the book to the fate of the Jews

in the time of Mohammed. To the many proofs that Mohammed received much of his knowledge from Jewish scholars, he adds one more which is that in the early Suras in the Koran, written in Mecca, there is little evidence of his general knowledge of Judaism, but that knowledge becomes much deeper and more inclusive and embrative in the Suras written in Medinah. The reason is clear, for in Medinah he came in contact with many Jewish scholars and gradually acquired the knowledge he sought. Ben Zeeb asserts that not only did the Jews teach the prophet, but they were indirectly a factor in the spread of his religion. He quotes an Arabic tradition that the Bené Koraish of Mecca, the opponents of Mohammed, sent several of their men to the Jewish scholars in Medinah to learn their view about his teachings and that they approved of them. Moreover, he asserts that the tribe of the Bené Hassar, who were the first to embrace Islam, did so because they lived among the Jews and were therefore favorably inclined toward a religion which largely resembled that of Judaism. In fact, Mohammed, for a time, probably in the hope of attracting the Jews to his faith, adopted many Jewish practices—the Day of Atonement, prohibition of the flesh of swine or the flesh of dead animals—and also instructed his followers to turn to Jerusalem in prayer. But, having been disappointed, he turned against them.

In a number of pages, the author describes the wars of Mohammed against the Jewish tribes. In the course of five years after he came to Medinah, he got rid of all the Jews. The Bené Nadhir were the first to be attacked, and having been defeated, were exiled and settled among their brethren in Haibar. The war with the Bené Kainukaa followed and they were also exiled. Worse was the fate of the Bené Kuraiza. After their submission, Mohammed ordered all men killed and all women and children taken captive. Ben Zeeb asserts that the Bené Kuraiza could have attacked Mohammed's forces and thus raise the siege of their fortress, but that they refrained from attack because they did not want to desecrate the Sabbath.

Mohammed was more lenient to the Jews of Haibar and let them remain on their land, but levied a heavy tax on them. Omar, the Caliph following Mohammed, ordered them to leave. Thus ended the glory of the Jews of Arabia. Yet there were still small Jewish settlements in Haibar even as late as the early sixteenth century. The author quotes a report by an Italian visitor in Haibar in the year 1503, which states that there were five thousand Jews in that province. In Tema there existed a Jewish community up to the eleventh

century, for we find in the writings of the Gaonim, Sherira, and Hai, responses to queries from Tema Jews.

The value of Ben Zeeb's history is much enhanced by the numerous quotations from Arabic authors and from inscriptions.

#### 40. HISTORY OF CITIES

A historical work of great value is the *Sefer Yerushelayyim* (Book of Jerusalem), containing the history of that city from earliest times to the destruction of the Second Temple, 70 C.E. The work is edited by Michael Abi Yona and has nineteen contributors. The term history is employed here in its widest connotation, for it contains the natural history of the city; the history from the inception of Jerusalem to the destruction of the First Temple in the year 586 B.C.E.; and of Jerusalem in the days of the Second Commonwealth. Each of these parts is divided into sections; the first part deals with the geography, topography, geology, climate, and the flora and fauna of Jerusalem and its environs.

The second part embraces essays on the prehistoric period; the political and spiritual life within the city during the period of the First Commonwealth; the archeology of the period containing inscriptions on monuments and tombstones dating from that time; the plan and structure of the First Temple; and the water works of Jerusalem. The essays, written by scholars, each of whom is a specialist in his field, not only give a comprehensive survey of the aspects they discuss, but throw much light on obscure points in the long history of that city. Thus, we learn from the essay of M. Stekles on the prehistoric settlements in and around Jerusalem that these settlements go back to the Paleolithic Stone Age. and that during the prehistoric eras these numbered as many as forty-eight.

B. Maser, in his learned essay on the city before the establishment of the Davidic Dynasty, informs us that Jerusalem is referred in Egyptian writings at the end of the nineteenth century B.C.E. as "Rushalimum." But among the letters of Tel El Emarna, written in the Babylonian cuneiform script, by Kings of Canaan to the Egyptian Kings Akmeothop III and IV, who reigned in the first half of the fourteenth century B.C.E., there are six letters from the King of Jerusalem, and the name of the city is given as "Ursalim." He also suggests that even after David conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites, the indigenous population were allowed to maintain some kind of autonomous government, for we read in (2 Samuel, XXIV: 21-24)

that when David bought the threshing floor from Aravna the Jebusite in order to erect an altar to God, Aravna is called king.

Ben Sholosh, who writes the essay on the political history from the time of David to the destruction of the First Temple, claims that although both 1 Kings, XIV:25, and 2 Chronicles, XII:2-7, state that Sheshak, the Egyptian King, in his invasion of Judea, entered Jerusalem, in reality he did not conquer that city. His own inscription, discovered in our day, shows that he did not enter it, but levied a tribute on King Rechaboam which was paid from the treasury of the King and of the Temple. He also asserts that Jehoshafat endeavored to make Jerusalem, in addition to the political capital, the center of study and administration of justice for the entire Judean kingdom, as is evident from 2 Chronicles, XIX:4-11.

Yevin, in his survey of the spiritual aspect of Jerusalem, asserts that cultural and literary activity began in Jerusalem as early as the time of David. He assumes that David founded a school in Jerusalem where scribes and administrators of various government departments were trained, and, most likely, draftsmen and architects as well. Otherwise, he says, how could David take a census of the people or draw up plans for the Temple as is indicated in the Bible? Likewise, he posits that extensive literary activity, in the form of historical works and religious poetry, was going on during the period. He asserts that we must accept the view that a number of Psalms were composed during the First Commonwealth.

The articles on archeology and inscriptions merit our examination. In the first, N. Abigad tells that parts of the wall which had surrounded the city during the First Commonwealth and which were discovered recently, were allegedly built in the time of Solomon, he also describes several graves of that period, in particular, the grave of the Daughter of Pharaoh. He describes its architecture and says that since the grave called The Daughter of Pharaoh is built in Egyptian style, it is possible that it was constructed by Solomon, who, as said in the Bible, had married an Egyptian princess—one cannot be certain. In the second essay, by Kutcher, the inscriptions of the period are discussed in detail, especially the famous Siloam inscription engraved on the wall in the tunnel dug by Hezekiah in order to bring the waters of the Shiloah into the city. Another inscription discovered upon a grave reads: "This is the grave of Yehu, the steward of the house. There is no gold or silver in it, only his bones and the bones of his female servant. Cursed be the man who will open

the grave." Kutcher quotes a number of partial inscriptions and mentions a large number of clay handles which are stamped with the words *Le-Melek*, to the king. The writer explains that the pitchers were manufactured in various factories which had belonged to the king.

Much learning and mastery of the sources as well as the art of construction are manifested in the essay on the First Temple by the famous archeologist and general, Yigal Yadin. The majestic building in its various parts, including all the instruments, vessels, and ornamentations of the Temple, are reconstructed in their entirety and illustrated with many drawings.

The plan of the second part is continued in the third part, dealing with Jerusalem in the period of the Second Temple. The essays, though, contain more material on the subjects they deal with, for the period is more familiar. However, due to that very fact, the essays on the political, spiritual, and cultural aspects of the history of the period contain little new. The case is different with the essays on archeology, on the City of Graves, and the two essays on the Hebrew-Aramaic and the Greek inscriptions. Here there is much that is new, for all is based on recent diggings and discoveries.

In the first essay, Michael Abi Yona deals with both the archeology and the topography of Jerusalem of the period and attempts to reconstruct the several walls which then surrounded the city and their size and location, according to the sources and archeological discoveries. He also discusses the location of various fortresses, towers, and palaces. All this throws much light upon the history of the last Jewish war with the Romans.

In the second essay, the numerous graves of the period are described by N. Abigad in detail. He deals with their location, architecture, and the forms of burial which had prevailed. Of these, the most interesting is the custom also mentioned in the Talmud, of having two burials. First, the body was laid in a coffin and placed in a grave, and, when the flesh was consumed, the bones were collected and placed in a small stone or clay box called *Gluskema*. These *Gluskemas* are described in their various forms and shapes as they were brought forth by the excavations. However, we learn more about the importance of the *Gluskema* graves from the last two essays, on inscriptions.

Of the numerous Hebrew-Aramaic inscriptions on the graves and *Gluskemas*, the most important is the Aramaic inscription which

reveals that the bones of Uzziah, King of Judah, had been brought to this place and that no one should dare to open it. It seems that the king was buried somewhere else, and, most likely centuries later, his bones were transferred. Another inscription on a coffin in the group of graves, known as the King's graves, bears the inscription in Aramaic, *Zada the Queen*. It is assumed that the grave was a family grave of the royal house of the land of Adiabene in Mesopotamia, the members of which had embraced Judaism, and that the name *Zada* refers either to Queen Helen, mentioned several times in the Talmud, or to a relative of hers. Inscriptions on *Gluskemas*, telling of the names of the person or persons whose bones they contain are sometimes in Hebrew and at other times in Aramaic.

Of the Greek inscriptions, the earliest and most important is the one which was placed on the Temple Mount forbidding non-Jews to enter the Temple. There must have been a number of inscriptions placed along the Mount, for several copies of this inscription were discovered. Of the Greek inscriptions on graves, the most interesting reads: "These are the bones of Nikanor of Alexandria who made doors to a gate of the Temple." Nikanor is mentioned both in the Mishnah and in the Gemarah. At the end of the inscription, the name Nikanor is also given in Hebrew.

The most valuable essays in the collection are the last two, *The Divine Worship in the Temple* by Samuel Safrai and *The Second Temple* by Abi Yona. The detailed account by Safrai of the way the sacrifices were brought, prepared, and placed on the altar; the ritual of offering incense daily and on Holy Days, including the Day of Atonement; the songs of the Levites; and all other forms of worship during the entire year, is a work of great erudition. Similarly meritorious is the essay on the construction of the Second Temple by Michael Abi Yona, for the Temple described was built by Herod and considered one of the most magnificent in the world. Such a description of its numerous parts, siderooms and galleries reflects scholarship and artistic sensibilities on the part of the author.

## ii. RABBI MAIMON

Of books which deal with parts of Jewish history, either of periods, countries, or cities, the three volumes edited by Rabbi Maimon, *Arim we-Imahot be-Yisrael* (Cities Which Are Mothers, i.e., nursing places of spirit and culture in Israel), are of special importance. The volumes contain monographs contributed by a number of



scholars on all aspects of the history of fifteen leading Jewish communities, whose activities left an indelible impression on Jewish life during the last millennium. In most of these cities the communities were wiped out during the catastrophe which befell the Jewries of Eastern Europe, and these monographs are, as the editor calls them, literary tombstones on their ruins. Among the communities dealt with are a number whose names are famous throughout world Jewry—Wilna, Vienna, Lemberg or Lwov, Krakau, Berlin, Odessa, Budapest—and of other cities, whose names may not be as resounding, but whose contribution to Jewish life was great.

The monographs are, on the whole, brief but all-inclusive. There is hardly an aspect of Jewish life which is omitted. They delineate the political situation, legal conditions under which Jews were allowed to settle in the cities, the privileges granted them in certain periods, and, on the contrary, the discrimination and expulsions which mark the sufferings the communities bore in the course of their history through massacres, attacks, and pogroms. The economic situation, the social activities, and charitable institutions are described in sufficient detail. Special attention is given by the writers to spiritual and cultural activities. They name the academies founded and maintained by the communities, give biographies of the great scholars who had served in them as rabbis, and evaluate their influence on Jewry. Likewise, they cite personalities and scholars, who distinguished themselves in various fields of secular knowledge or in political activity, and were born and raised in these communities.

From this short description of the contents of the monograph, we can estimate their value and the quantity and quality of the light they shed upon Jewish life in the large Jewish centers of Eastern Europe during many centuries. We will quote a few illustrations of the rich historical data the monographs offer. We learn that although the first Jewish settlements in a section of the present Budapest took place at the end of the eleventh century, Jews were there in the third and fourth centuries. A Latin inscription on a tombstone found in that vicinity gives the name Benjamin as that of the interred. It also bears an engraving of two seven-branched Menorahs beneath, on which the words "God is one" are inscribed in Greek. It proves definitely that Jewish soldiers served in the legion stationed in the Roman province, Panonia, later changed to Hungary. The monographs present interesting facts about Jewish life and their economic activities. Thus, we are told that in the city of Berlin, in the year 1703, the

Jews were ordered by the Kurfürst to have the cantor recite the prayer of *Alénu* in a loud voice, expulsion was the penalty for transgression. They also reveal that at the end of the eighteenth century there were in Berlin thirty Jewish and twenty-two non-Jewish bankers in Berlin.

Coming down to modern times, we learn that between the years 1803-1810, 5 per cent of the Jewish population of Berlin was converted to Christianity. Important statistics are also given of the Jewish population in several other large cities during the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century. The highest number for Berlin was 172,690 in 1925; for Budapest, 204,311 in 1910; and for Odessa, 180,000 in 1939. The writers provide lists of the periodicals in Hebrew, Yiddish, and European languages published in the leading cultural centers of each country, such as in Wilna and Odessa in Russia, Berlin in Germany, and Vienna and Budapest in Austro-Hungary, from the middle of the eighteenth century to the present day.

The writers of the monographs are Raphael Patai, Eisenstadt in Hungary; Joseph Meisel, Berlin; Joseph Klausner, Wilna; A. Goldhammer, Munkatch; I. Wolfsberg, the three-branched community of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsebek; S. Schechtman, Odessa; S. Weingarten, Budapest; J. Pogrebenski, Nemerow; and A. Fürst and Z. Karl, Krakau. The editor writes on Ostroho in the province of Volhynia, Russia, famed during the sixteenth century for its rabbis, whose learning was great and whose influence was wide. Rabbi Maimon's historico-biographical style possesses a special charm, for he surrounds facts and events with a halo of folk tales and popular legends which enhance the value of the work. The book should form a *wade mecum* for every student of Jewish history.

#### 41. PALESTINE AND THE DIASPORA

A work of great historical importance, which sheds light on a number of phases of Jewish life in Palestine and in the Diaspora, is *Sheluhé Eretz Yisrael* (Emissaries of the Land of Israel) by Abraham Yaari. The purpose of this work is to present the history of the relationship between Palestine Jewry and the Jewries of the Diaspora, carried on by means of Palestinian emissaries. It deals with the origin of this institution, the length of its existence, its purpose, and the various activities of the messengers.

The primary purpose of these visits was the solicitation of funds to help the Jews of the Holy Land and their charitable and educa-

tional institutions, although, as will be seen, their activities had a much wider range. It follows, therefore, that these frequent visits originated a short time after the loss of the State and the destruction of the Temple. Previous to that time every Jew in the world contributed half a shekel to the Temple. This money was collected in large sums by the scattered communities themselves and sent to Jerusalem. There was no need for emissaries, nor did the Jews of Palestine need financial help. With the destruction of the Temple, this half shekel was paid by the Jews within the Roman Empire as a special tax to the Roman government which was used by it for the maintenance of the Temple of Jupiter in Rome. In addition, after the loss of the State and Temple, the Jewish economic status in Palestine deteriorated, and help was necessary, hence the rise of the institution of emissaries. Accordingly, Yaari chronicles the history of the institution and the activities of its representatives.

Yaari quotes references in Talmudic literature to a number of such missions by great scholars during the Tannaitic and Amoraic times. We find that Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, Joshua ben Hannanya, disciples of Johannan ben Zakkai, together with Akiba, went to Antioch in order to raise money for the support of the scholars of the Academy (in Hebrew it is termed *Migbat Hakamim*). Rabbi Akiba went several times for that end. Similarly it is stated that Judah the Prince, redactor of the Mishnah, sent several representative scholars to lands of the Diaspora.

In addition there are numerous references to these missions by great scholars in Amoraic times. Simon ben Lakish, leading scholar of the second generation of Amoraim, visited Babylonian cities for that purpose, and other scholars, for instance, Hiyya Bar Abba and his brother Simon, frequently visited various countries to raise money for the institutions of the Holy Land. We also learn from the Talmudic records that the Patriarchs used to give the Sheluhim an official document empowering them to perform their mission. These visits continued until the end of the Talmudic period. The Christian Fathers, Jerome (end of fourth century) and Eusibius (first half of that century) speak of these visitors with respect and call them Jewish apostles, and even the Roman law recognized the collections as a legal activity up to the year 429 when Theodosius the Second prohibited it. It seems, though, that the visits continued even after that year for missions were sent to lands outside of the Roman Empire. The author quotes a reference to Palestinian representatives visiting

the Hymerite Kingdom in Arabia where the royal dynasty and a part of the population were converted to Judaism.

The author then records missions from the conquest of Palestine by the Arabs (637 C.E.) to the time of the Crusaders (1100). The first reference to a visit by Palestinian representatives in a European country during the eighth century is found in an inscription on a tombstone of a young woman in the cemetery of Venossa, Italy. It is stated there that eulogies were delivered at the funeral by two Palestinian apostles and two local rabbis. Numerous other records of such visits in many countries during the period are quoted by Yaari.

The conquest of the Holy Land by the Crusaders and the wars which it entailed put an end to these missions for a time. But when the situation in that land gradually stabilized, missions were resumed. By the last third of the thirteenth century, the apostle or Sheliah, Rabbi Jacob, was sent to France by Rabbi Yehiel of Paris, after he had settled in Acre in the year 1260, to obtain support for his newly established Academy in that city. However, says Yaari, his is the only name of a representative on record for the following two centuries.

With the increase of Jewish population in the Holy Land from the middle of the fifteenth century on, especially after the expulsion from Spain, there is a continuous record of missions to all parts of the world and of the various Sheluhim activities up to the end of the nineteenth century. The author devotes the bulk of his book to the description of the visits and activities of the representatives during the last four centuries. We will note a number of points which he makes in his introduction to the history regarding the character, function, and activities of the emissaries.

First, the emissaries chosen by the heads of the leading communities, such as Jerusalem, Hebron, and Safed, were selected on the basis of character, scholarship, and standing in the community. Among these there were many known authors, and men of great personality. The letters of authority given them not only presented the emissaries in the proper manner, but also told of the situation which forced the communities to ask for help. The emissary was given the power to represent the communities in all legal matters,—bequests, the establishment of funds, and the like. At the end of the mission, the emissary had to render a detailed report of all income and expenses. His reward was usually a third of the income. It should not be considered too great, for the trip lasted for a number of years, and involved

considerable difficulties. Those who went to distant lands faced many dangers crossing deserts or rivers on rafts. In fact, many emissaries were killed or suffered from disease and injuries.

The most important point emphasized by Yaari is that the Sheluhim gave more to the communities of the Diaspora than they received from them. Possessing knowledge, for their official title was Sheluhé de-Rabonon (Emissaries of the Scholars), they interpreted legal questions, introduced improvements into public life, and increased the pursuit of learning. In addition, they ordained young rabbis, and endorsed the publishing of learned works. Besides, their very appearance brought comfort to far-flung communities, reminding them of Eretz Yisrael, strengthening their hope for redemption. In India and Cochín China they freed the black Jews from servitude and subjection to their white brethren. These are only a few of the services they performed.

The detailed description of their activities during the last four hundred years, which occupies more than six hundred pages, unfolds the wide canvas of Jewish life in many countries on which numerous episodes are drawn.

#### 42. HISTORY OF LITERATURE

The two volume work, *ba-Shirah ha-Ibrit be-Sforad u-be-Provinzia* (Hebrew Poetry in Spain and in the Provence) by Hayyim Shirman, the first volume of which contains selections from the poetic productions in the Classical Period or Golden Age, and the second from the works of the bards and singers during the period extending from 1150 to 1492, is a valuable contribution to the study and appreciation of Hebrew poetry during half a millennium. It is distinguished by the quantity and quality of the selections, by the enlightening notes and explanations appended to the poems, and, above all, by the introductions.

The selections are not limited to short specimens but embrace large portions of the works of the poets, and at times, as in the case of Joseph Ibn Zabara and Judah Al-Harisi, they consist of one hundred pages each. They afford the reader and the student of Hebrew poetry a means of fully comprehending the quality of the poetic productions of the bards. They are not limited to strict poetic forms, such as lyrics, epics, ballads, or sacred poetry (*Piyyutim*), but also include works in rhymed prose of a didactic or narrative character. The introductions to the selections from the works of each poet contain bio-

graphical data and brief characterizations of the nature of the works from which the selection was taken. Of special value is the general introduction to the work as a whole placed at the beginning of the second volume.

In this introduction, the author clarifies several points, throwing light upon the rise of that poetry, its general character, and the changes which it underwent during the half millennium of its production. He begins with the query: what were the causes which contributed to the rise in Spain of a secular Hebrew poetry, hitherto an unknown species in Jewish literature? He attributes this rise primarily to the influence of the environment. Both national groups living in that country, the Arabs and the Christian Spaniards, used two languages or two variations of one language. The literary language of the Spaniards was Latin, the spoken, Spanish. The spoken Arabic was a kind of Arabic dialect, but the literary one was a classical Arabic; with both groups, secular poetry was a great favorite. When the Jews wanted to emphasize their national character in a land where several national groups lived side by side, the cultivation of a secular poetry in the national language seemed the logical medium for that purpose.

Another factor was the development of Hebrew philology and biblical exegesis, which in turn was the result of the influence of the environment. These studies revealed a new aspect of the Bible, its literary and poetic character, arousing a sense of beauty. In addition, they widened the use of Hebrew, for through them new nuances in words were discovered, making possible the new usage of words. Therefore the poets had a wider vocabulary range in Hebrew. Environment also influenced the poets in the choice of subjects. Love, wine, and nature sung about by Jewish bards were frequent themes in Arabic poetry. Patronage of poets, which was prevalent among the Arabs, brought about a similar practice among the Jews, and consequently, friendship poems became familiar to Hebrew poetry, which in turn raised the position of the poets in Jewish society. As a result, there arose a large class of lovers of poetry who appreciated its art and enjoyed its musical notes.

Shirman points out that even in the sacred poetry, which already had a pattern established by the *Paitanim*, the Sephardic poets employed the ways and means which were used by them in their secular songs, and thus raised it to a higher level. Here and there, says he, they followed Paitanic style, but on the whole, few of its newly-

coined, complicated expressions were used by them. He even asserts that up to the thirteenth century, the secular poets rarely employed words and terms borrowed from the Mishnah and the Talmud. Instead, the poets ransacked the treasures of the Bible in order to find material for expression, and frequently adopted words found only occasionally in the Bible. It was, says our author, only from the thirteenth century on that poets began to employ Talmudic and Mid-rashic words in large numbers. Our author offers some details about the various styles and ornamentations employed in that poetry. He finally points to the optimistic spirit of the secular poetry and its general human character. This work, through its lengthy selections and valuable, erudite notes and introductions forms an important contribution to the history of Jewish literature.

## ii. SHALOM BEN BARUCH

Shalom ben Baruch, a veteran publicist and the author of several volumes, wrote *Yeruselayyim be-Shiroténu ha-Hadashah* (Jerusalem as Reflected in modern Hebrew poetry). This work presents a survey of that part of modern Hebrew poetry in which Jerusalem is sung about. The survey is extensive almost to completeness, for passages from over two hundred and fifty poems are quoted.

The work is divided into two parts. The first surveys the Jerusalem poems classified according to the period of production, place, sex, age of the poet, and the main characteristics of the motif. In addition, there are chapters which deal with Jerusalem poems in which the religious note is emphasized; others were written as lullabies or as children's songs. The passages quoted in the first part form only a small portion of the survey. They are only samples and illustrations of the content of the poems from which they are taken, which are in turn summarized, evaluated, and highlighted.

Of special interest are the chapters on the fundamental motifs in the Jerusalem poetry. To mention several, in some the glorification of Jerusalem expresses the spirit of the nation as a whole; in others, the singers express their own feelings and thoughts; and, in still others, the natural beauty of the city is stressed. There are bards who sing of Jerusalem as it appears on the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and of the joy and sorrow which the city arouses; others sing of its natural contrasts, the deep darkness at night and the exceptional brightness at noon, or employ motifs stemming from the age-long halo enveloping the Holy City. There is hardly a man of letters who

did not write Jerusalem poems. Among the authors of such poems, we find the late Rabbi Isaac Cook, Peretz Smolenskin, and the popular Yiddish novelist, Naḥum Meir Shaikewitch, known by his pen-name, *Shomer*. The second part, which forms the bulk of the work, deals with the Jerusalem poems by a large number of poets, referred to briefly in the first part, and with others who were not mentioned at any length before. Longer sections of the poems are given to which short essays are added, analyzing and evaluating a group of Jerusalem poems, laying stress upon stanzas distinguished by their beauty and depth of feeling.

The work generates a better and deeper appreciation of a large part of modern Hebrew poetry.

#### 43. BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Of the biographical works of the period, the *Toldot Hagra* (The Biography of Elijah, the Gaon of Wilna) by Judah L. Maimon is an outstanding one, for it is distinguished by its quantity and quality.

An introduction describes the role of the Jewish community of Wilna and its leading scholars in the spiritual life of Polish Jewry during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is followed by short biographies of thirty outstanding rabbis and scholars in Eastern and Western Europe in the time of the Gaon. This introduction serves as a background to the portrayal of the life and activities of the subject of the biography. The work contains chapters on the youth of the Gaon, on the intensity and embraciveness of his studies, his method of study, the great contributions of his scholarship, the Gaon as master of the Cabalah, and his influence on the generations. But as such influence cannot be exerted in the absence of disciples and followers, Maimon devotes almost one third of his work to the delineation of the activities and scholarly contributions of the two great disciples of the Gaon, Rabbi Ḥayyim of Volozhin, founder of the famous Academy of that city and his brother Rabbi Zalman, and of the two sons of the Gaon, Rabbis Abraham and Leib. This part alone forms a luminous chapter in the spiritual and scholarly life of the Lithuanian and Polish Jewries.

The biography ends with a bibliography of the works of the Gaon which is of special interest. As is well known, the Gaon did not publish a single work during his lifetime. All his works, fifty-four volumes remained in manuscript form and were published posthumously. We are astounded not only by their number, but at the



exceptional knowledge displayed in them. There is not a subject in the millennial Jewish literature to which this Gaon did not make an important contribution, and the range extends even to general scientific subjects, for they include the *Ail Meshulosh*, a work on trigonometry, and *Sefer al ha-Tekunah* (A Book on Astronomy). The last is still in manuscript form in the possession of Rabbi Maimon. The mere titles of the works make us wonder how one human mind can absorb so much information.

The great value of Maimon's work consists not in the facts given, but in the manner of his narrative, for not only does it tell the life story of the main character, but integrates episodes in the life of other characters, each episode illuminating their high moral qualities. In addition, the narrative is seasoned with a large number of stories containing wit, humor, and folk legends which illustrate the lives and personalities of the characters.

We cannot restrain ourselves from quoting at least one of the stories, which is told in the name of Rabbi Levi Yitzhak, famous Hassid—when Rabbi Elijah died and his soul ascended to heaven, the heavenly court found it pure and righteous, but there was one spot on it, his opposition to Hassidism. After much discussion, it was decided that he must listen to one discourse by Rabbi Naḥum of Chernobel, a disciple of the Besht, which was delivered from time to time before a group of Zaddikim. Then Rabbi Elijah would be led directly to Paradise, but if he refused, he would be led to Paradise via the door of the Gehinom (hell). The Gaon answered, "I will rather pass by the door of the Gehinom than listen to a Hassidic discussion." Then something wonderful happened. Thousands upon thousands of pages of the Talmud, which the Gaon had studied intensely and devotionally many times, arranged themselves in an enormous mass, closing the door of the Gehinom. The angels were forced to lead him directly to Paradise. This legend illustrates the admiration of even the opponents of the Gaon for his extraordinary love, devotion, and complete immersion in the broadest meaning of Torah.

The work also contains twelve reprints of small works by the Gaon which had been out of print for a time, and a work which was still in manuscript form, to which the editor had added notes and comments. Among these works there are the *Dikduké Eliyahu*, a Hebrew grammar, a grammatical commentary on the first chapter of Genesis, and a short treatise on Hebrew synonyms, alphabetically arranged.

ii. ISRAEL COHEN

Israel Cohen occupies a prominent place in Anglo-Jewish literature to which he contributed sixteen works, among them *Jewish Life in Modern Times*, *Travel in Jewry*, and *The Zionist Movement*, all of which shed light upon aspects of Jewish history during the last half century. He has finally written his autobiography, *A Jewish Pilgrimage*. It is one of the rare books whose title is appropriate, for while all autobiographies are merely accounts of the writer's pilgrimage in life, this one is primarily the story of half a century of pilgrimage in Jewish life, both in time and space, as well as in its social and cultural aspects with Zionism at its heart. Nor is the term pilgrimage used euphemistically, for the author actually visited almost all of Europe, a large part of Asia, Australia, and small sections of the other two continents.

After telling of his studies at the Jews College, his early interest in Zionism which had its inception at the first public meeting addressed in London by Theodor Herzl in July 1896, as well as of his first steps in literature, he unravels the saga of his pilgrimage. It began in 1910. Cohen was then invited by David Wolfson, who succeeded Herzl as President of the Zionist Organization, to come to Cologne and act as secretary of the Zionist Central Office as well as of the Jewish National Fund. The contract was for two years, but he remained in Germany until the middle of 1916, settling in Berlin when the Zionist headquarters were transferred there, where he also had the opportunity to continue his activity as correspondent for several English dailies. Meanwhile, the war broke out, and Cohen, as an English subject, was imprisoned for two and a half years until his liberation in June 1916. Returning to London, he spent a quarter of a century in Zionist work in the Zionist Central Office, then in London, all of which required much traveling.

In the year 1919, when pogroms broke out in many Polish towns, he was sent by the Zionist Organization to survey the Jewish situation in that country and ask the government authorities to intervene. In 1920, he was sent to Australia and the far Eastern Asiatic countries to raise funds for Palestine. He was gone for nine months. Shortly after his return to London, in 1922, he was sent by the Zionist Executive, on special missions to all European countries. From 1924 to 1928 he visited these countries once again. From the year 1929 to 1956 he occupied an important position in the Zionist Cen-

tral Office. He was simultaneously secretary, publicity director, and advocate of the Zionist cause in the British Press, as well as its leading defender against attack. The story of his multifarious travel experiences and the development of the Zionist movement, is of exceptional interest, for it sheds light on many a dark corner of Jewish life in the Diaspora during the first half of the century, and on a part of Zionist history unknown even to leaders of long standing in Zionist work in America and abroad.

The narrative of Cohen's travels is replete with data and items of interest which illustrate Jewish life in the far countries of the world and the response of these scattered Jews to the call of Zion. We will quote a few: Melbourne in Australia had only six thousand Jews in 1920, yet they contributed one hundred thousand dollars at one meeting; and a small Jewish community of several hundred Jews at Perth responded with twenty-five hundred dollars. We also learn of the change in Jewish population in that part of the Diaspora. In 1920 there were ten thousand Jews in Harbin, Manchuria, and the same number in Mukden. In 1933, Shanghai had twenty thousand Jews, most of them refugees from Russia and Germany, but after the Second World War, the Jewish population in all China dwindled to about seven hundred. The narrative also bristles with the description of interesting characters met by the author, of whom Mrs. E. A. Gordon, a Christian woman, a follower of the Zionist movement from the days of Herzl, is exemplary. She invited Mr. Cohen to visit Kyoto, the old capital of Japan, in order to hear about the progress of the movement. She gave him fourteen hundred dollars for work undertaken in Palestine. Later, on returning to London, Cohen was informed that it was Mrs. Gordon who furnished the fifty-six hundred dollars which enabled the Zionist Executive to send a commission to Uganda, East Africa (1903), to investigate the territory then offered by the British government to the Jews.

The tales of his pilgrimages in European countries on special missions from 1922 to 1924, and again from 1924 to 1928, offer an interesting description of the political, cultural, and religious conditions of the Jews in a number of countries of Eastern and Central Europe, as well as of the state of Zionism in these countries. They also reveal the great loss Jewry sustained by the catastrophe as illustrated by statistical data. We learn that in these years, Riga had a community of thirty thousand Jews, while hardly any were left there after the war. Prague had eighty thousand Jews and Jewish culture

was much in evidence there in the late twenties. The city of Salonica in Greece had fifty-six thousand Jews in those years, but now it has only twelve hundred, and all of Greece only six thousand. We also learn that since the establishment of the State of Israel, forty thousand Bulgarian Jews migrated to Israel, and only seven thousand were left in their native country.

The saga of forty years of Zionist history is valuable as it reveals a number of streaks in the character of the Zionist leaders with whom he was in close contact during that period. His description of the personality of David Wolfson, who guided the destiny of Zionism for eight years and who is now almost forgotten, will please many old-time Zionists. Suffice it to say that he was the first to establish a fund in 1917 for the proposed Hebrew University, but few knew of it, for it was given anonymously. From Cohen's narrative, we learn of the difficulties which beset the Zionist administration, and not the least of these was the friction between its leaders. Thus, Weizman opposed Wolfson's policy and was unfriendly to Dr. Gaster despite the fact that most of the negotiations which brought about the Balfour Declaration were held in his home. The reason given was Gaster's snobbishness. We are also informed that Sokolow and many members of the Executive were against the establishment of the Jewish Agency, and that Weizman had great difficulty in overcoming the opposition.

Mr. Cohen narrates many details about the difficulties encountered by the Zionist leaders in meeting the attacks of the British Press on the Declaration and on Jews in general. In 1921 and 1922, when the Palestine Mandate had to be ratified by the League of Nations, frequent letters appeared in leading British Dailies connecting Zionism with Bolshevism, or complaining of the expenditures which this Declaration would entail. The opposition was especially strong in the *Daily Mail* owned by Lord Northcliffe with which Lord Balfour was greatly annoyed and once expressed himself as follows: "I hear this creature, Northcliffe, is attacking us." Similar attacks were repeated in the early thirties after the report of the Shaw Commission was made and the White Paper by Passfield was published, and even later, in 1936 and 1937, at the time of the Arab attacks. All these criticisms had to be answered and the case of Zionism placed before the British people in the proper light. The author's account of this aspect of Zionist activity, in which he played an important

role by his own literary contributions, reveals to us the great struggle for recognition which the political aspiration of Zionism had to face.

Chapters XVI and XX are extremely important. The first briefly delineates the technique and procedure of the Congress, the leading institution of Zionism for more than half a century. As a result, even those who never attended a Congress can obtain an idea of the way Zionist policy was formed and controlled during all these years.

The second chapter offers a large series of vignettes of world-famous personalities who visited the Zionist Central Office in London, among them such non-Jewish Zionists as Field Marshal Smuts of South Africa; Colonel Josiah Wedgewood, an indefatigable worker for the cause, called "Josh" by his Zionist friends; and Blanche Dougdale, a niece of Lord Balfour, who spent much energy and effort to ensure the maximum implantation of the Balfour Declaration. The book fully justifies its title, for it offers its readers the important aspects of an extensive, half-century pilgrimage in Jewish life.

## CHAPTER X

### PHILOSOPHY

#### 44. HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

##### i. ISAAC JULIUS GUTTMANN

An important work which helps to evaluate Jewish philosophic thought through the ages is *ha Pilisufia shel ha-Yehadut* (The Philosophy of Judaism) by Isaac Julius Guttman, which surveys Jewish philosophy from its beginnings in the Bible to our own days. The work is divided into three parts—the first dealing with the ancient period embracing the trends of thought in the Bible, in Jewish Hellenistic works, and in the Talmud. The second is devoted to Medieval Jewish philosophy, and the third to contemporary thought.

In discussing the biblical view of God, the world, and man, he emphasizes that the monotheism of the Bible is not a mere abstract monotheism, but one which endows God with a personality expressed primarily in will. The world was created by His will and, consequently, it is His will which directs the world and history. God's relation to the world is a voluntary moral relation, as is His relation to man. Man is not, as in the mystic pantheistic view, supposed to endeavor to identify himself with God, but must subject himself to His will and imitate His moral actions.

Though the Bible posits the religious truth as an historical datum to the people as a whole, yet the individual plays an important role in Judaism. The prophets, especially Jeremiah and Ezekiel, repeatedly stress the moral responsibility of the individual. The Psalms continuously speak of the love of God for man, a love which also embraces the individual, and demand that the individual must cultivate in his own soul love for God and consider its attainment the happiness of the pious (Ḥassidim).

The prophets, says Guttman, always looked toward the future,

insisting that the exile of the people of Israel, which they prophesied, would be succeeded by a renewal of the closeness between God and Israel, and much good would follow. The good, though, would include all nations who would, at that time, share in the knowledge of God, and this future state is the very aim of history.

When the Jews in Egypt came in contact with Greek philosophy, it began to influence their views, for they saw in Platonism and Stoicism an affinity with their own thought. An endeavor was therefore made to present the content of Judaism in philosophic form. Guttman points to the evident influence of Greek philosophy in the Apocryphal books of Wisdom of Solomon and the Fourth Maccabees, but concentrates his discussion mainly on the philosophy of Philo.

He claims that Philo introduced a great change in the biblical view of creation, for he assumes the existence of a formless, primal matter from which God created the world. As to his conception of God, he not only stresses His transcendence above the world, but even removes from Him any form of personality, and says that all we can know of Him is that He exists. As a result of such conception of the Godhead, he had to introduce a mediative power between Him and matter, and that is the Logos. Our author points out another deviation of Philo from the view of historical Judaism which is that the height of religiosity is the ecstatic rise of the soul to the upper world and thus comes close to God. Such view differs from the ideal religiosity of historical Judaism which stresses the ethical aspect. Still, says Guttman, in spite of his deviations, Philo clings to the belief in the Sinaitic revelation and considers it the announcement of the highest and absolute truth, with the Torah as its basis, and hence his allegorical commentaries on the biblical books.

As for the Talmud, our author says that on the whole it expresses the same view as the Bible, and emphasizes such conceptions as the transcendence of God, the moral quality of His commandments, the election of Israel, and the hope for the kingdom of God in the future. The anthropomorphic expressions found there are only attempts to stress the nearness of God to man. We find there, though, great emphasis on the world to come, resurrection, and on reward and punishment of the individual after death, views which were not stressed in the Bible. There is also much emphasis on the moral aspect of Judaism as can be seen from the statement of Hillel, "Love thy neighbor as thyself is the basis of the Torah." All these thoughts, as well as other important religious views are not presented

in a systematic way, but, to a large degree, in short statements scattered in the Talmud and Midrash. Nor was there an attempt to elaborate a system of dogmas fixed in definite manner.\* It is the absence of such a system which, according to Guttman, offered a certain measure of liberty to later thinkers to offer various interpretations of the leading beliefs.

The second part which occupies the bulk of the work contains a complete history of Medieval Jewish philosophy from its beginning in the tenth century to the end of the sixteenth. Briefly discussing the causes which brought about the rise of that philosophy, the chief of which he finds in the influence of Muslim philosophy upon Jewish thought, and in the need for a defense against attacks upon Judaism, Guttman turns to the presentation of the views of the individual thinkers. On the whole, he finds in the long development of that philosophy three trends, that of the Kalam, the Neo-Platonic, and the purely Aristotelian.

He names Saadia and Judah Al-Mekamez among the Rabbanites and Joseph Al-Buzari, Joshua ben Judah, and Aaron ben Elijah of Nicomedia among the Karaites as the followers of the first trend. As for the Neo-Platonic trend, he employs the term in a broad sense, and, as a result, he includes in that group not only such philosophers as Isaac Israeli and Solomon Ibn Gabirol, who followed Neo-Platonism to a large degree, but also a number of others, Bahya Ibn Pakudah, Joseph Ibn Zaddik, and even Judah ha-Levi among the Neo-Platonists. The leading Jewish philosophers from Abraham Ibn Daud and Maimonides to Isaac Abarbanel are included in the pure Aristotelian group. Guttman devotes a special chapter to the influence of Jewish philosophy on the system of Spinoza. The leading philosophers in the modern period dealt with are Moses Mendelssohn, Solomon Formstecher, Samuel Hirsh, Nahman Krochmal, Moritz Lazarus, Herman Cohen, and Franz Rosenzweig. The surveys of their thought are, on the whole, brief but clearly presented with the exception of that of Rosenzweig, where the portion dealing with his general philosophy, besides that of Judaism is not entirely lucid.

The value of the book is enhanced by its completeness for there is hardly any Jewish thinker omitted, even those who are little known are given space. We thus learn that Joseph Ibn Aknin, the beloved

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\* There is an attempt in the first Mishnah of the tenth chapter in the tractate Sanhedrin to stress three dogmas as fundamental to Judaism.



disciple of Maimonides, for whom he wrote the *Guide of the Perplexed*, differed in a number of points with his admired teacher. He asserts that we must not make all endeavors to bring the words of the Bible in harmony with reason when they seem contradictory. The contradiction, says he, is only an apparent one, and it is due to the weakness of our human reason. Similarly, Guttman points out the differences in the views of Abraham, son of Maimonides, from those of his father. There is a note of mysticism in his thought, and his ethical system is closer to that of Bahya than to his father's. Nor does he assume, as Maimonides does, that divine influence comes to the prophet through the mediacy of the Active Reason, but calls the power of prophecy a divine light which illuminates the soul of the prophet.

The book is provided with an extensive bibliography and hundreds of notes which add to its value.

## ii. MOSES ZEEB SOLAH

A short popular history of Jewish thought was written by Moses Zeeb Solah entitled *Moré Derek be Pilisufia ha-Yisraelit* (A Guide to the Philosophy of Israel). The value of the work consists primarily in its comprehensiveness and its presentation. It discusses not only the trends of Jewish thought usually dealt with in histories of Jewish philosophy from the Bible on, but also includes views of the Cabalah and Hassidism. Coming down to modern times, he widens the conception of Jewish philosophy to include national thought, such as that of Ahad ha-Am and A. D. Gordon, and also the views on Jews and Judaism of thinkers whose main interest lay in general philosophy, such as David Koigen, Theodore Lessing, and even those of Otto Weiniger, whose view of Judaism was a negative one. He similarly extends the frame to include many scholars and thinkers whose chief contribution lay in other fields of Jewish learning, and are not included in works of Jewish philosophy, for example, Rabbi Cook, Hillel Zeitlin, and Martin Buber. He does not neglect the scholars who contributed to the knowledge of Jewish philosophy with their essays and partial histories of that philosophy.

The presentation, though brief, is clear and stresses the principal views of the thinkers and their contributions. It is on the whole a useful book.

## iii. NAHUM ARIELI

*Ozar ha-Rambam* (The Treasures of Maimonides) by Nahum Arieli is an exceptionally well-selected, alphabetically arranged an-

thology of excerpts from the writings of Maimonides. It is distinguished by the range of the writings from which the passages were taken as well as by the extent of its purpose. There is hardly a work of Maimonides, even those which are still in manuscript form, which are not utilized by the author. It is similarly wide in its content. It presents the views of Maimonides on ethical conduct, rules of hygiene, social relations, family life, leading theological, psychological and philosophical concepts, the purpose of the holidays, reward and punishment, among numerous other subjects.

The introduction, which briefly surveys the writings of Maimonides, emphasizes several valuable points. Among them is the use which Maimonides makes of Agadic thought in all his writings, especially in his commentary on the Mishnah where he frequently indicates the Agadic basis on which the Halakah is founded. Even in medical writings, Agadic thoughts are, at times, integrated, primarily when the subject is mental disease.

#### 45. RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

##### i. MARTIN BUBER

During the last decades, Hassidism has become a favorite subject with Jewish writers, scholars, and thinkers. It is idealized in many short stories and in some novels. A number of books deal with its leaders and teachings. In fact, as far as Jewish literature is concerned, we can say that there is a definite trend or current in it which we may call Neo-Hassidism, and Martin Buber is to be considered a leading interpreter of this current. In his work, *Pardes ha-Hassidut* (The Garden of Hassidism), he attempts to present a philosophy of Hassidism, paralleling it with general theological and mystical thought.

In the first chapter, entitled "Spinoza, Sabbatai Zbi, and the Besht," Buber attempts to delineate the fundamental features of the Gospel (Besurah), or the religious message of Hassidism. The great contribution of Judaism, says he, does not consist merely in positing the existence of God and only one God, or Monotheism, but mainly in endowing Him with a kind of personal relation to man, or in Buber's favorite way of expression, in "I and Thou" form. God speaks to man and calls to him, and likewise answers man's call to Him. A daughter religion of Judaism injected into this religion a mediator through whom man can reach God. Spinoza, on the other hand, seeing in either way only an attempt to minimize the exaltedness of God, removed it, asserting that God does not speak nor reveal Himself to man. God, or as he calls Him at times, "nature" (not

meaning to limit His essence), is in the world, and it is there where contact between man and God takes place. The things in the world, says Spinoza, are the only form of God's speech. Forms of religious worship through sacraments in order to reach God, claims Spinoza, abolish the world, for they become an aim in themselves, and even God becomes, in reality, unknown. On the other hand, Spinoza's view that the world is the place of contact between man and God, was ultimately narrowed down by his followers to mean that the world is the only place of God.

Buber says that though the founders of Hassidism knew nothing of Spinoza and his views, it can be said that their message gave the proper answer to Spinoza. He is, of course, aware that the Jewish sages of old said that the world is not the place of God, but that He is its place, though He also resides in it, yet Buber claims that Hassidism gave this concept a new expression, a practical one. The newness consists in asserting that the world becomes holy by man's contact with its objects and parts in which there are sparks of the Godhead waiting to be redeemed. Hassidism made even the process of eating, whether vegetable or animal food, a process of sanctification, if done in the proper manner as an act of honoring God. In actions done this way, man stands before God in the very world which He created. Thus, according to the author, the fundamentally new concept which Hassidism enunciated on its entry into Jewish life, is that man joins with the world before God.

But what is the meaning of the redemption of the sparks the Godhead scattered in the world? This, says Buber, is founded on the teachings of the Cabalah which asserts that the instruments in the creation of the world, through which divine influence streamed, could not contain the grace and goodness and broke. The flaming stream erupted into sparks which were overcome by crass matter, the shell that harbors them, and this incompleteness of the world is the source of evil. God, of course, could complete the creation and redeem the world. But he wants man to complete it with his good deeds and by his coming in contact with the world, motivated to perform every action in honor of God, thereby redeeming the world.\*

However, says our author, this redemption which Hassidism emphasizes is not exactly the Messianic redemption at the end of days

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\* Cf. History of Jewish Literature, Vol. II, 417 on the doctrine of the breaking up of the vessels or instruments taught by Isaac Luria.

of which the false Messiahs pretended to be the announcers. The movement of the false Messiahs not only ended in failure, but in straying from Judaism, as was the case with Sabbatai Zbi and Jacob Franck. Hassidism rose as an antidote to this movement. It rejects the view taught and practiced by the false Messiahs, that in order to redeem the divine sparks, one must immerse in evil, or that the Mitzwot lost their obligatory power, for it is said in the Talmud that in Messianic times the Mitzwot will be abolished. The redemption taught by Hassidism, says Buber, is a continual process to raise human life to a higher level and sanctify it, and through it save the world from the evil within it. This is, according to him, the very foundation of the message of Hassidism.

He then proceeds to delineate its influence and value. He admits that Hassidism did not introduce any new principles or views into Judaism. We find them in the teachings of tradition, or in the Cabalah, but the spiritual elements received through it is strength, primarily of a practical nature. He again emphasizes that Hassidism saved a part of Jewry from the crisis which entered in its life through Sabbataism and Frankism. Rabbinic scholars fought for the continuation of Torah, but did not endeavor to renew the spiritual life. This was done by Hassidism, by training special leaders to satisfy the need of the masses. This need was satisfied by introducing Zaddikim as the leaders of groups. The Zaddik (literally, the righteous man) always had great value in Judaism, but in Hassidism, he exerts influence as a leader of a group to whom he becomes a mediator between God and them. The mediation consists in this that he, by his completely pious daily conduct, serves as an example of a sanctified life which should be imitated, and of course, he teaches his followers how they themselves can come in contact with God without any mediation. However, says he, we must not assume that Hassidism asserts that the ordinary man can receive religious influence, but is unable to contribute it himself. On the contrary, it emphasizes the value of the man who, though he is not learned, is saturated with deep religiosity. Stories magnifying the greatness of simple men, some of whom could not even read, but whose thoughts and actions were devoted to one purpose, to honor and glorify God, are prevalent in Hassidic lore. In fact, in its very ability to attract these unlearned and simple men lies the strength of Hassidic teaching.

Buber turns again to the religious contribution of Hassidism, and reiterates its emphasis on the sanctification of all forms of life which

leads to redemption of the divine sparks in the world and in life. That sanctification is primarily expressed in the intensity of the performance of an action for the sake of the glory of God, and also in the overcoming of evil thoughts or desires. Even in such thoughts there are divine sparks which are to be redeemed and liberated. To Ḥassidism, says Buber, *How* an action is performed is more important than the action itself, i.e., the religious intensity expressed in performing the action raises its value to a high degree. It is by following this mode of action that the Zaddik is distinguished. He is supposed to be the perfect man, one who practices that form of conduct through which God wants to be recognized, loved, and desired.

The author continues to delineate the contribution of Ḥassidism, and says, "In Ḥassidism, love of God and love of fellow man become one." He quotes numerous statements of Ḥassidic Zaddikim to that effect, one of which is by the Besht. Said he, "It is stated, thou shalt love thy friend as thyself. This means that just as thou lovest thyself, though thou knowest thy defects and deficiencies, so must thou love thy fellow man with all his deficiencies." Another Zaddik said, "To the statement, thou shalt love thy friend as thyself" are added the words, "I am the Lord God," which means that if you love your friend as you love yourself, then you will come to recognize fully the greatness, majesty, and goodness of God. In other words, love of fellow man leads to the love of God.

He completes his presentation of the philosophy of Ḥassidism with a survey of the role which redemption plays in its teachings. In it, says he, there are four types of redemption—the redemption of the holy sparks; redemption of the individual Jew; national redemption; and redemption of the *Shekinah*, which means the rise of all humanity to the proper recognition of God. These types are continually emphasized in its teachings.

This, then, is the essence of this philosophy as Buber presents it, extracting it from extraneous discussions and numerous comparisons. We can say that while there is much learning in the work and much thought, there is also much exaggeration. While he admits that Ḥassidism did not contribute any important principle to Judaism, he continues to speak of it not as a trend in Judaism, but almost as a separate religion. The very title of the last chapter, "The Place of Ḥassidism in the History of Religion in General," points to that

tendency. And, he does not clarify the very view of redemption of the sparks which he posits as the foundation of Ḥassidism. Furthermore, the fact is that Ḥassidic works from the Besht on, while they speak of this theory, for they borrowed it from the Cabalah (especially from the teachings of the *Ari*, Isaac Luria), they do not make it the foundation of their teachings.

The new light of Ḥassidism, which Buber stresses so much, is not altogether new. *Kavanah*, i.e., concentration of thought in performing a Mitzvah, is already stressed in the Mishnah (Tractate Menahot, XIII:11), nor is the sanctification of life a monopoly of Ḥassidism. The Talmud, Midrashim, and ethical works magnify its value.

The view of the Zaddik as a mediator, which he propounds, though with modifications, is fundamentally opposed by Judaism. Even in its modified form, it ultimately did not contribute much to the salvation of Judaism. The statement that only in Ḥassidism love of fellow man and love of God become one is not correct, for it is emphasized in the entire Jewish ethical literature, beginning with the Bible. The statement of the Besht, how to love one's fellow man, is taken from the commentary of Nahmanides on Leviticus (XIX:18), nor have the Rabbinic scholars failed in that love. The very opponent of Ḥassidism, the Gaon of Wilna, let his family suffer hunger for many weeks when the clerk of the community stole his meager stipend, and though the Gaon knew of it, he refrained from complaining so that he would not shame a fellow Jew. It became known when the clerk confessed to that act before his death.

All this is said not with any attempt to minimize the value of Buber's work nor that of Ḥassidism. I recognize the great value of the contribution of Ḥassidism and its great emphasis upon religious emotion in Volume III. I merely oppose, for the sake of truth, over-evaluation and exaggeration which are the vogue today in Jewish literature, often at the expense of Rabbinic scholars, or non-Ḥassidic Jews, the so-called Mithnagdim, i.e., opponents, a very inappropriate name.

## ii. ELIEZER STEINMAN

Another work which aims to reveal the light of Hassidism and evaluate its influence in deepening the sense of religiosity, is the *Béar ba-Ḥassidut* (Well of Hassidism) by Eliezer Steinman. This work is limited, as its subtitle, *Mishnat Habad* (The Teachings of

the *Habad*), indicates, to a leading branch of the movement known as *Habad*—an abbreviation of three words: *Hokmah*, *Binah*, *Daat* (Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge).

Logically, the work can be divided into two parts, three essays by Steinman and an anthology containing a large collection of passages from the literature of *Habad*, as well as statements of oral teachings of the leaders, or the *Zaddikim*, of the movement. Steinman's first essay, *Meorot ha-Habad* (The Lights of *Habad*), primarily indicates the special contribution of this branch to religious thought and its distinction from *Hassidism* in general. On the whole, he limits it to two points. First the emphasis by *Habad* of the role thought plays in religion. It is not enough to live religiously, but, says *Habad*, man must also think religiously. He is to immerse himself, according to his ability, in the knowledge of the Godhead, His greatness, goodness, and the value of His commandments. The second point, *Habad's* concept of the role of the *Zaddik*, differs to a great degree from that of *Hassidism*. The latter emphasizes his role exceedingly and makes him the very center of religious knowledge. It is through the devotion and adoration of the *Zaddik* that the *Hassidim*, share in religious exaltation. *Habad* says that the *Zaddik* only arouses the *Hassidim* to think for themselves, for this is the duty of every religious man. The *Zaddik* helps them in that endeavor and points the way in that direction.

Another fine point in this essay is Steinman's definition, according to *Habad's* views, of these three terms, *Hokmah*, *Binah*, and *Daat*, the three parts of thought. The first consists in the conception of an object in general; the second is the understanding of the particulars of the object; and the third is the concentration upon that understanding. In other words, it is the will to endeavor to understand. In this case, the object is the source of all religious knowledge, the Godhead, and *Hokmah*, being the concept of the object in general, is more embrative and even catches a glimpse of its essence. The process then is the following: Man must possess *Daat*, i.e. the will to endeavor to understand, and concentrate his endeavors to the highest degree; he will then reach *Binah*, understanding of certain particulars; and thence he may reach *Hokmah*. *Habad* believes that every Jew may have a share in these three steps of religious knowledge, though in various degrees.

It is to be noted that while Steinman continually emphasizes that *Habad* is a system, his essay on its lights shows little systematization.

It contains much euphuistic writing, and the very light is dimmed. Still, as stated above, we get glimpses of it.

The second essay is a biography of the founder of the *Habad* movement, Shneor Zalman (1748-1813). It is a comprehensive biography and discusses not only all events of his life, including his arrest by the Russian government, but also all phases of his personality, his activities, and his great influence upon the masses. Its value is greatly enhanced by integrating in it passages containing Shneor Zalman's religious views, culled from his writings, which shed light upon phases of his personality. In addition, it includes a number of stories and legends. One of these stories deserves quoting. When Shneor Zalman was in prison in St. Petersburg, he was asked by the warden, "Why do you Jews rejoice on the last day of Succoth when you conclude the reading of the Pentateuch? In the last chapter it is stated that Moses died; you should then mourn on that day rather than rejoice." After asking for forgiveness, in case his answer might cast some aspersion on Christianity, the Rabbi answered, "We rejoice at the death of Moses for were he to live forever, people would worship him as a God because of the great deeds he had performed. But since he died, all know that the miracles and deeds he performed were accomplished by the power bestowed upon him by God." The third essay deals with a number of aspects of the views of *Habad* which throw light upon the system as a whole.

The second section, or the anthology, consists of two parts—passages from *Habad* literature alphabetically arranged and a collection of passages from the works of the heads of the movement, from Shneor Zalman, the founder, to Joseph Itzhak, who died in 1950 in New York, together with many quotations from their conversations and oral teachings, as well as stories and legends. In addition, the author includes a number of letters written by the founder of the movement to outstanding Hassidic leaders, and also several *Habad* songs and a brief description of the Book of Melodies, edited by Rabbi Samuel Salmanov, the fourth leader of the movement.

Thus, while the work can hardly be considered a popular one, people who want to delve into it, can learn much about the views of this important branch of Hassidism and deepen their religiosity in general.

#### 46. ENCYCLOPEDIAS

The survey of Jewish learning and thought will not be complete



without a brief discussion of the several encyclopedias which were published or started in the last twenty-five years. Though most of them, with the exception of one, are still far from complete, the volumes which have already appeared are of great literary and scholarly importance. The first in the range of its embraciveness is the *Enziklopedia Ivrit*, intended as a complete general encyclopedia but with this difference, that since it is published by Jews, not only do numerous articles affecting Jewish life in any way find a place, but the Jewish aspect, whenever necessary, is integrated in articles which are of a general nature. We will offer two illustrations. The article, "proselyte" (*Ger*) occupies thirteen pages, mostly devoted to the Jewish aspect. Not only is the Jewish attitude toward proselytising widely discussed and all laws relating to it, but the history of proselytising movements as well.

The article "Germania" (Germany) contains thirty-five pages on the history of the Jews of Germany from the ninth century to the twentieth. No wonder that the eleventh volume ends in the middle of the letter *Daleth*, fourth letter of the alphabet. For a time, Professor Joseph Klausner was the editor-in-chief, but he has been succeeded by Professor Isaiah Leibowitz.

The second is the *Enziklopedia Talmudit*, (Talmudic Encyclopedia) edited by Rabbi Solomon Joseph Zevin. Its range is also wide, and its eighth volume ends in the middle of the letter *He*, fifth letter of the alphabet, for the sea of the Talmud, swelled by currents from Talmudic literature turns into an ocean, and the number of articles to be included will rise into the thousands.

The third is *Ozar ha-Mikra u-Tekufoto* (Encyclopedia of the Bible and the Biblical Period). It was edited by Professor M. D. Cassutto until his death. It is not as extensive as the former two, for its second volume ends with the letter *Zayen* (seventh in the alphabet), but the embraciveness of the articles can be gauged from the fact that the article *Dat Yisrael* (Religion of Israel) extends for forty-five large pages.

The fourth one is the *Ozar Eretz Yisrael* (A treasury of the Land of Israel), completed in four volumes. Its articles offer all that can be known about the geography, topography of cities of the land, and its past and present history.

## PART III

### American Jewish Literature



## CHAPTER XI

### HEBREW LITERATURE

#### 47. *GENERAL REMARKS*

As noted in the introductory remarks to the sections on Yiddish and Anglo-Jewish literature, it seemed best to include the surveys of this literature as part of Jewish world literature. The literary survey presented in the following chapters will therefore be limited to American Hebrew belles-lettres in both poetry and prose, and to Jewish learning and thought.

As for the character of American belles-lettres, there is little to be added to what was said about it in the preceding volume, for the last twenty-five years introduced few new features. No native writers have come to the fore, and that branch of literature still remains primarily a transplanted one. The poets, as a rule, follow the general currents in Hebrew poetry, and the originality consists mainly in the individual expression of the poetic patterns. As in the previous period, lyricism is an outstanding trait of the poetic compositions of this span of time. However, due to the two great events which have occurred during the last two decades, the national element is more in evidence than in the preceding periods, and similarly, the poems of several of the younger poets are marked by a personal note reflecting the experiences which they themselves underwent during the days of terror.

There is some change in the prose works. More attention is paid to American Jewish life, and several of its aspects are reflected in these works, especially in the short stories. On the whole, this literary branch is limited in quantity, for in spite of the great efforts of the lovers of Hebrew to spread the knowledge of that language through extensive propaganda on its behalf, little success has been achieved in creating a demand for that literature.

Essays and criticism fared somewhat better, for the fate of a large

part of world Jewry and the birth of the State of Israel offered many topics for discussion. Similarly, the spiritual and cultural state of American Jewry presented many problems for consideration. As a result, numerous essays dealing with these matters were published during the period, primarily in periodicals and annuals, but a number of them were later collected in books. Nor was there a lack of critical works, for the increase of the literary production of all kinds of Hebrew works in Israel evoked a considerable number of reviews, analyses, and interpretations of these works by American Hebrew writers. The quality, however, of both essays and criticism, with few exceptions, is not outstanding.

Great productivity was displayed in the field of Jewish learning and thought in both Hebrew and English. A number of scholars whose works were discussed in the preceding volume continued to produce important works in the various branches of learning. They were joined by Israeli and European scholars who settled in this country during the last quarter century and contributed their share of scholarly works. A number of younger scholars, born and raised in this country, cultivated the field of scholarship and widened the range of Jewish learning. They were especially active in American Jewish history, for which the interest evinced in the celebration of the Tercentenary of the Jewish settlement in this country served as an impetus.

Thus, American Jewish literature forms an important link in the chain of literary activity of world Jewry during this period.

#### 48. HEBREW POETRY

##### i. HILLEL BABLI

The poet Hillel Babli, whose earlier collection of poems was noted by us in the preceding volume, has since produced another collection entitled *Aderet ha-Shonim* (A Colored Cloak). It seems, however, that the poet uses this title euphemistically to indicate the cloak of tradition of generations in which his soul as well as his muse are wrapped, and against which he at times attempts to rebel, but in vain. He tells us in one of his poems, *Al ha-Gebul* (On the Boundary) of two such attempts, once in his youth, when the house of his father, the Rabbi, became too confining, and the lure of the great world too strong, he tried to escape into that world, but soon returned. Later in life he repeated this attempt, but again with little success. However, the cloak fits him, for its spirit supplies both depth

and breadth to his poems, for many are the strands of that cloak. God, the fate of the Jewish people, its suffering, and the land of Israel are sung about.

In a number of his lyric poems, there reverberates the echo of the catastrophe in Jewish life of the period. One of the most moving of these is *Iggeret Tishim we-Sholosh be-Naarot* (The Letter of the Ninety-three Girls). These pure, pious girls committed suicide to escape contamination by the Nazis. They say: "Together we studied the Torah; together we recited the prayers and the confession; we are ready to die. We have only one request to make to our scattered brethren wherever they are, 'Say Kaddish for the ninety-three daughters of Israel.'"

Bent under the burden of sorrow and grief, Babli seeks support from God, pleading: "Widen my heart and deepen it that I may gather within it the pain and suffering of my tortured brethren. Strengthen me that I may follow the path my brethren trod on their way to destruction, they who believed in Thee, while standing on the brink of death."

In another poem, *Honéni Elohai* (Show Grace unto Me My God), he asks not only for strength in belief, but also that God reveal to him once more the world in its purity and grant him a glimpse of the divine beauty. He also pleads for the song he once knew, so that he may sanctify the splendor of every new day, and absorbing its light, seek out the downtrodden and the suffering and offer them comfort and hope.

A particular beauty saturated with deep spirit is attached to the poems which express a father's love for his child, and joy in his talk and play. Says the child; "The sun is setting," and his eyes reflect glee at its beauty and sorrow at its setting. Says the poet: "World, thou wert revealed to me through the eyes of my child with twofold brightness and twofold sorrow." The child mischievously answers, "I shall bring you some sun from the woods," to which the father replies, "bring from the woods or from wherever you will find the magic light, like the one in your eyes, which will pierce the fog of falsehood and the cloud of deceit and reveal the glory of man and the purity of the world."

Babli knows other themes, many biblical, of which the poem *Pesuké ha-Tanach*, written in 1948 at the birth of the State of Israel, is stirring. It is an ode to the Scriptures. Sings the poet, "Verses of the Bible, you have arisen and revealed yourself in full glory. Verses

of the Bible, hidden streams of life hummed in you through the ages of desolation, but winding through the darkness of exile, freshness dried up and they became pale shadows. The time has now come when the hum of your life is heard once more, and the voice of your eternal song rings in the air and your message flutters like a flag of victory."

A group of narrative poems called *Bnai Litta* concludes the collection. In these, Babli presents a gallery of portraits of Lithuanian Jews, each of whom, in his life and personality, offers a glimpse of the life of that Jewry which for ages was wrapped in the cloak of tradition. It is this aspect of Babli's poetry which imparts to it its permanency.

## ii. MOSES FEINSTEIN

Another poet, Moses Feinstein, whose poetic productions were noted in the preceding volume, has since made a daring attempt to sing, in a long historical poem, *Abraham Abulafia*, of the life and dreams of the most baffling Cabalist of the thirteenth century. Abulafia, oppressed by the fate of his people, seeks a way out of the straits, and cries for light out of darkness; he delves into Cabalah to find a way to hasten the redemption of his brethren. He travels from land to land, pays a visit to Zion, enters deeper and deeper into the mysteries of the letters of the Holy Name of God, has visions, and becoming convinced that he is the one to bring the redemption and declares himself the Messiah. He is excommunicated, but the vision continues to drive him on. He visits the Pope and attempts to persuade him of the superiority of Judaism. He fails, and, with the failure, the vision and the man disappear from the world. It is this drama of deep feeling and thoughts, distortedly reflected in the soul of the Cabalist, which is portrayed in Feinstein's poems.

The first moment of the drama is depicted in the opening poem when young Abulafia, standing on the bridge at the gate of Tudela one early morning, meets a stranger. The stranger says: "I am glad to meet, on entering the city, a young boy offering his morning prayer." "Nay," says Abulafia, "it is not the prayer from the Siddur that I am offering, but one which wells from my soul, pleading for bright dawn to dispel the darkness of the ghetto. Hear you not the peal of church bells? Their voices are heard throughout the wide world, while here in the ghetto, shadows flutter, and the Holy Scrolls cry out in the dark; we cry to God out of our straits, but He hears

not." The poet thus offers us the key to Abulafia's soul. Oppressed by darkness, he strives for the light and for the breadth of the wide world, but where is the path to attainment? He asks the stranger to instruct him. Slowly the stranger tells of his own search for the way to light; he has not yet found it, but he is still searching. He informs Abulafia that in his search, he is destined to find stretches of darkness, but, also, strips of light.

Abulafia accepts the mission, feels the rise of the dawn in his soul, and hearkens to a voice calling to him in the night. The poet echoes the thought of Abulafia. "Different," says he, "are the ways in which God's voice speaks to man. At times, it is through a burning bush, at other times, it is by the still small voice, and at still other times, it is through the very letters of His name and the visions which one sees that the voice speaks."

There follow other scenes in his life. One takes place on a boat filled with Jews fleeing from death and torture. Abulafia storms in his plea to God to redeem Israel. A fellow mystic, Rabbi David, comforts him by saying that these tribulations are pre-Messianic pains, and calls upon him to join in offering a mystic prayer in a corner in order to force redemption. Abulafia agrees to the use of force, but refuses to pray in a corner. He wants a wide movement for redemption. In vain, David pleads for the still small voice, Abulafia thinks differently. He demands that God reveal Himself once more, as on Sinai, with thunder and lightning.

The same stormy mood is repeated in other dialogues between Abulafia and another mystic, Rab Saadia at the Cave of Elijah on the Carmel, and other places in the Holy Land. Saadia attempts to question the bursts of mystic enthusiasm and the rising visions which Abulafia sees, but in vain. The visions increase, his ecstasy grows, and, finally, he claims to hear a voice saying: "Go and redeem Israel."

Several poems portray the last moment. Abulafia accepts the command of the voice, visits many countries, and at Palermo, Sicily, discloses himself as the Messiah. When the Rabbi threatens him with excommunication, he cries that the end of suffering has come. Thence, the Cabalist wends his way to the Vatican where he delivers a thunderous message in which he prophesies the termination of the rule of the Church. Thus the drama ends.

I call the attempt "daring," for the production of the poem required study of Abulafia's writings and much concentration of thought on welding ethereal points into a general picture which offers us



insight into the soul of a great, though distorted personality, who attempted to solve the age-long problem of Israel's suffering. The poem contains many passages portraying scenes of nature which impress us with their poetic beauty.

### iii. ISAAC SILBERSCHLAG

Isaac Silberschlag's collection of poems, *Alé Olam be-Shir* (Rise O World in Song), is one of the few poetic works whose contents justify its title. His muse is not limited to one subject or aspect of life or of the world, but embraces many themes. He sings of nature, love of Israel, of both the people and the land, and even of the plight of the negroes. Nor is the poet absent from his poems. He also sings of Poland, the land of his birth, his arrival in this country, and of his various moods during the years, especially of the tremor which seizes him when he envisions the time when his song will be silenced.

This last group of poems, *Death and Immortality*, written in three-, or two-word lines, is distinguished by its contention that there is no complete death, for, says he, "in my voice there speaks my father's voice, and in his voice his father's voice rings, and thus generation after generation speaks through the voices of their descendants. Only the body disappears, but the spirit continues.

His nature poems paint beautiful sunsets and their reflection in lakes and ponds, "they echo the song of the wind when rattling the green reeds—"a song so soft," says the poet, "that people hardly hear it," and he adds "similarly, songs of poets, charming as they may be, seldom enter the hearts of men; only one heart in a thousand is thrilled by its tune." Very beautiful is his *Ode to the Lilac*, written in a masterly two-word line.

Of his national poems, the outstanding one is the *Monologue of Judah ha-Levi* in which we are told, in lines culled from ha-Levi's own love poems, of the beauty of the woman he once loved. Having been disappointed in that love, he turned to another love, for, says he, "there is no life for a poet except a life of love—love of life, of God, and man." This new love is the love of Israel and Zion. The spirit of the dead poet continues to sing of the spiritual sublimity of the soul of the people and the beauty of Zion, which drew him to cross seas and wander through deserts in order to rest in its ruins and moving, describing the destruction and suffering caused by the Arab kiss its stones. His short poem, *Et Zwaa* (A Time of Terror), is very

attacks on the Jewish colonies in 1936—"where a child awoke with a sweet smile for his mother, but the mother was not there: where the red juice of ripe fruit mingled with the red blood of the wounded."

His love poems have little of the personal in them, but are dedicated to the glorification of the beauty of women and of love itself. In one of his poems on love, he says: "love flourishes best in quiet places, in the shadow of rocks and lofty trees, where it gathers both pain and happiness. Love is also fond of tears; man is born with a cry and is buried with cries, both of love." Thus love marks the beginning and the end of wonderful moments in human life.

#### iv. GABRIEL PREIL

Gabriel Preil (1911) displays in his two poetic works, *Nof Shemash u-Kfor* (Land, Sun, and Hoar Frost) and *Nér Mul Keko-bim* (A Candle by the Side of the Stars), lyrical talent in portraying the beauty and charms of nature, as well as power of reflection on life and its vicissitudes. Writing of the stages of human life, he describes childhood as uncharted land which has neither paths, nor hills, nor vales; youth as a bow bent by the strength of the spirit, burning with desire and striving; old age as the hour before nightfall when silence reigns at the edge of a well in which the reflection of the stars loses its brightness—and the poet adds, "that stage in my life will come, but I shall receive it with resignation tempered by pity at my youth that is passed."

Preil possesses a special ability for noting a poetic or reflective trait in very simple actions or things. Passing an old man who is removing snow from the sidewalk, he says, "two colors of whiteness crown the man, that of the snow at his feet, and that of the hair on his head, which complement each other. The former symbolizes the fleeting bright years of youth, and the latter, years of the setting sun of life. Both are the standard of measure of man's life on earth." In many of the short poems, there rings a strong note of pessimism which is rather strange for a poet young in years, but the note does not terrify us; it only arouses us to reflection.

Preil also distinguishes himself in a number of long nature poems in which he portrays with charm the rich scenery of Maine with its sea-shore, forests, and lakes. Here, too, he does not forget the life led by the people of Maine in the midst of that scenery, and devotes many stanzas to the description of children playing on the lawns,

fishermen throwing their nets in the lakes, and the preparation made by men and women in towns and villages on the eve of the holidays. Nor does he ignore the life of his Jewish brethren. In a long poem, he renders in stately lines the conversation of two old men, denizens of Maine, which takes place between them while taking a walk in the forest on a Sabbath afternoon. The subject is God and His relation to the world. Being addicts of chess, the conversation takes the form of an imaginary game on the chess board of the world, with God's hand moving the figures. The game is not completed, but the few moves discussed reveal some fine thoughts.

*Gabriel the Sainted*, movingly describes the island he lived on, where no storms raged and love had its place—the Island of the Torah. And when the storm came, Gabriel gave his life to save his heritage, and reddened the Scrolls of the Torah with his blood. Taken as a whole, Preil's poetic works are a valuable contribution to the Hebrew poetry created in this country.

#### V. ELHANAN INDELMAN

Elhanan Indelman, a poet who went through all the experiences of the great catastrophe which overtook the Jews in Poland during the Second World War, who lived in the Warsaw ghetto, saw his mother and sister taken to the concentration camp where they were cremated, worked for a time in the labor camp in Northern Russia, and later settled in this country, sings in his collection of fine lyrical poems, *Eben Li Ekah* (I Will Take a Stone for Myself), primarily of his own experiences. However, his muse knows also the beauty of nature, and attempts to capture the light of life.

The volume is divided into four sections: poems of destruction, of slavery, of childhood days, and of life in general. In all of these, the lyrical tone is distinguished not only by its beauty, but also by its moving power. His catastrophe poems, though they are short and do not describe the suffering and torture in gruesome detail, penetrate to the depths of our hearts with their quiet cry which reveals to us the full extent of the tragedy. In one of these, *Hashkéni Elobai* (Make Me Drunk, O God), he pleads: "make me drunk, O God, until I will be intoxicated. I will then forget the terrors of the past"; and he continues, "my mother has no grave; only the wind caresses her holy ashes; nor has my sister a grave; only the cloud reflects to me her shining image." He describes the tragedy of the Warsaw ghetto in several passionate lines:

The ghetto at night is God's lantern,  
And the soul of my nation is the flame.

And looking at its ruins later, he says:

The eye of the sun hides under the lash of the cloud  
As if ashamed to look at the revelation of destruction.

Likewise heartrending is his poem dedicated to his mother whom he sees in a vision:

Wrapped in bright splendor,  
Rising in flame but living in its light,  
Body consumed like parchment,  
But the spirit ascends to heaven  
Like the letters of a burned Torah.

His labor-camp poems, saturated with deep sorrow, impress us with their poetic beauty. Bent under the burden of hard labor, he calls to the saw in his hand:

Cut saw, cut as long as there is a spot of light within me  
As long as the candle of light is burning.  
Cut and saw, saw.

In his songs of childhood, there flit before us vision after vision of the days gone by, pictured in beautiful stanzas, but dipped in sorrow. The memories of the past only increase the pain of the present, but stronger than all is the filial and parental love with which they are saturated. The three things dear to the poet are the Bible, the prayer-book, and the tears of his mother. The Bible and the prayer-book lie before him, but where, asks he, are the tears of his mother? The answer is: "from the yellow pages of the prayer-book, I draw the tears of my mother, and this is the divine spark which lights and warms my heart." He also finds the spark of love in his mother's heart reflected in the eyes of his infant daughter, and thus he sees a bridge between the past and the future.

At times, when the effect of the sorrow of the near past is somewhat dimmed, the poet sings of nature and life. A bright summer morning intoxicates him with its light, and he sings with glee:

On summer mornings that rise high  
I am reborn and once more a boy,

Am ready to go to the end of the world  
 Drunk with life and curious of knowledge.

The poems are short and few in number, but they contain beauty, deep feeling, and love of nature and life.

vi. ABRAHAM ZEBI HALEVI

In the small collection of poems, *Mi-Tokh ha-Sugar* (From the Enclosures), by Abraham Zebi Halévi, wide and various stretches of life in general, and Jewish life and the life of the poet in particular, are portrayed. He sings of his bitter memories, of the days of the catastrophe in which he lost his loved ones, of his visit to Israel and his failure to settle there, and of the streets of New York. There is a tragic note in all of them, for his very soul is enveloped in the halo of tragedy, yet his eye is clear and penetrates to the very heart of things. He is, therefore, able to see the deeper phases embedded in the simple scenes.

Thus, watching a mighty tree standing in the midst of a battle-field, raising its head high and bringing forth flowers and fruit, while all around lie corpses of men and carcasses of animals, the poet says, "are you cold and cruel that you cover the shameful deeds of man with thy shade, or do you point to the future when a new generation of better understanding will arise? Teach me thy ways, O tree." While in Israel, during the War of Liberation, he notices the thorny plant known as Zabar, which withstands burning heat and storms, and yet strikes its roots deeper and deeper in the earth. He sees in it a symbol of his nation's struggle and he turns to it saying, "teach me, O Zabar, the secret of striking root in the face of storm and scalding heat."

A poem, *The Bowery in New York at Night*, portrays a group of homeless people, shivering in the cold, attempting to find some warmth and rest in the doorway of a Church. Inside the Church, there is warmth and wide, soft seats, but the doors are closed. From above, the statue of the crucified Redeemer looks down upon them. "But," says the poet, "he can offer no help, his look is silent and his head is bent low, and when the rain streams down, it falls upon the Redeemer together with his believers who shiver like dogs in the doorway." Satire and sorrow join in this song.

Halévi, though, knows some other strains. In a poem on the reflection of the full moon in a pond, he portrays the quiet and calm

which descends upon a humming city. The very hardness of the stones of the tall buildings seem to soften, and the trees, wrapped in silence, dip their branches in the water. It seems, says he, that the bustling world forgot its strife and anger and went down into the pond to cleanse itself, for it is reflected there in its restfulness and kindness. But such happy moments are few. Thus, and in many other variations, Halévi sings of life and its many facets, and of the echo in his own soul of all of them.

#### 49. SHORT STORIES AND NOVELS

##### i. L. Z. ARIELI

The collection of stories by L. Z. Arieli (1887-1943), *Le-Or ha-Venus* (By the Light of Venus), reflects the wanderings of the author from land to land and his multifarious experiences. The canvas of the narrative stretches from Russia to Palestine during the early days of Jewish colonization, and from there to the United States where he spent the last twenty years of his life.

Arieli displays ability in describing the actions of his characters in detail and his eye penetrates into their thoughts and feelings, but, on the whole, there prevails in his stories a pessimistic view of life, especially of Jewish life. For this reason there is little light and joy in them as they lack the happy ending which people usually expect. He always manages to introduce an episode or an event into the plot, no matter how far-fetched and how loose the connection may be, which ends the tale on a tragic note.

Two of the stories are of special interest, for they throw light on corners of Jewish life of several decades ago in Israel and in America. These are *Ben Asai ha-Temoni* and *Yomono shel Adam Boded* (The Diary of a Lonely Man). In the former we are told that when Ben Asai, who served as *Shamesh* (beadle) in the synagogue of one of the colonies in Palestine, heard his name called to come up to the Torah to participate in its reading, he was filled with joy, for he seldom enjoyed that honor. But when he pronounced the benediction and looked at the chapter to be read, he was seized with horror. It was the *Tokhafa* (Chastisement) which Jews usually avoid listening to, because it contains grave threats to the Jews should they sin. Ben Asai stood trembling but he could not retreat. At that moment, one of the young pioneers, Hayyim ben Shoam, approached the Scroll of the Torah and pronounced the benediction, and Ben Asai was relieved. The trustees grumbled at the young man for his in-

terference, but Ben Asai approached Ben Shoam, kissed his hands and showered upon him thanks and blessings. Before long, the two met again.

On becoming acquainted with a young Tamanite girl by the name of Nadira, Ḥayyim is impressed with her beauty and fine deportment, and they become friends. But when he attempts to kiss her, she withdraws with horror, explaining that she is engaged to marry her uncle, Ben Asai, at the request of her aunt who, before her death, imposed an oath upon her husband to marry her orphaned niece. Ḥayyim pacifies her and for a while he keeps her at a distance. However, the relation does not end there. A struggle begins in the heart of Nadira between her duty to her dead aunt and her attraction for Ḥayyim. She sees her aunt in dreams and hears her chiding her for neglecting to fulfill her command, but the attraction is strong, and one day she disappears from her uncle's home and joins the group of men and women working on a National Fund settlement, which Ḥayyim is heading. She is discovered by her uncle who upbraids her for her actions, telling her that she is committing a grave sin. She leaves the group, but returns again, and the relation between the two becomes closer. She continues to dream of her aunt, but still yields to Ḥayyim's kisses. The happy ending does not come, for fate intervenes. During an attack on the settlement, Ḥayyim is killed. Nadira cries bitterly, but in her mind there flutters a thought that perhaps Ḥayyim was punished by her aunt for his daring to persuade her to disobey her last request, and when Ben Asai asks her to come with him she obeys and follows him. We thus have a glimpse of the struggle in the soul of a young girl torn between love and naïve belief, in which love would have conquered were it not for the intervention of fate.

In the second story, the diarist Okon, who is the executive director of a wealthy conservative synagogue, tells of his experiences, of the tedious time he spends at the social evenings in the homes of the wealthy directors of the synagogue, and of the many functions he performs in his position as director. He arranges the banquets, directs the Boy Scout troops, supervises the Sunday and Hebrew schools, and the Bar Mitzwah and confirmation departments. Yet with all these activities and contacts, he is a lonely man. For some reason he rents a room in a Gentile boarding-house and, hesitating to reveal that he is a Jew, adopts the name of O'Koon. He is anxious to marry and longs for love and womanly beauty, but is prevented by his shyness from carrying out his purpose.

Once, when paying his bill in a restaurant, the cashier starts a conversation with him in which she evinces friendliness and interest. A date is proposed and accepted, and the result is a protracted courtship. She asks him his nationality and he answers, "Do you not know that people bearing names beginning with O' are Irish? She says, "I am also partly Irish, but my father was a Scotchman." The courting proceeds, but with great trepidation on the part of O'Koon for denying his Jewishness. Many a time he thinks of telling her the truth, whatever the consequences, but fate interferes again. In one of their walks they are met by a Mr. Krupnik, an officer of the synagogue, who exclaims, "What do I see, the director of our synagogue, Mr. Okon, and my protégé Fredele Green, keeping company." Okon chose well. Fredele or Florence Green comes from a family of rabbis and great Jews. Florence excuses herself and disappears, and with her Okon's dream of happiness. His loneliness increases and is followed by sickness and death. This story, despite its rather unusual ending, contains a biting satire on American Jewish life where even those whose source of income is Jewish work, are ready to deny their identity in order to enjoy a few pleasant moments. There are many other scenes of that life depicted, which show its spiritual hollowness and loose connection with real Jewishness. Things seem to have improved, but there are still corners which fit the picture.

## ii. B. ISAACS

The very title of the collection of stories, *Be-Shné Olomot* (In Two Worlds) by B. Isaacs, indicates the general theme of the stories as well as their content. Several of them depict facets of Jewish life in the towns of Eastern Europe, especially Hassidic life; the others delineate the youthful life of the characters in the ghettos of Poland and Lithuania, and their later experiences in America. A few stories are devoted entirely to a delineation of a corner of American Jewish life.

In the story, *Yedaim* (Hands), the author's ability appears at its best, for it reflects both the environment and the life of its leading character, Benjamin Schwartz, or "Binka," with great skill and with psychological insight. Binka, the son of a poor shoemaker in a Polish town, unconsciously rebels against the life of poverty and need in his home. He is especially repulsed by his father's hands which are always smeared with pitch, in which his thread is dipped. He develops a mania for clean hands and for a finer type of life than that of his



father's home. He is especially impressed by the clean white hands and the general appearance of the rabbi.

Binka's desire for the finer type of life, however, is not fulfilled for a long time. He follows his father's trade, and even excels him in it, but his hands remain clean and always white, for he never dips the thread into the pitch. There follow then a number of episodes in Binka's life. Working in a shoe factory together with other young men, he is introduced to the labor movement, attends union meetings, and even takes part in a strike, but his heart is not with the movement. He abhors violence, and his ideal of a quiet life is still with him. Circumstances force him to migrate to America. He is told by fellow travelers that his mastery of an important trade will enable him to find work immediately, but fate wills otherwise, for it is a time of depression. He finally procures work in a shoe factory, but his obsession for clean hands remains with him. The manager of the small factory is a young woman, the daughter of the owner, who is impressed by his fine character and dexterity. She advises him to attend a course in the manufacture of orthopedic shoes and opens a special department for him. Slowly, her interest in Binka or Ben Schwartz, as he is now called, becomes more personal and love develops between them and, against her father's wishes, they are married. Ben attains riches, but the fine traits of character remain with him, and from time to time he thinks of the Rabbi of the town of his birth, whom he had admired so much. And when the son of that Rabbi comes to New York to solicit funds for the building of a new synagogue in his home town, Binka gives him a check for the entire amount needed.

The happy ending is a bit forced, but the value of the story does not depend on that. It consists in the depiction of the scenes of Jewish life in the town, and primarily in the portrayal of the desire in Binka's young heart for a finer and nobler life expressed in the effort he makes to raise the social status of his poor father, and the joy he experiences when the Rabbi does not pass by his father's house when soliciting donations for the synagogue, though his donation may be small.

### iii. S. L. BLANK

S. L. Blank's volume of short stories, *be-Maarboleth ha-Hayyim* (In the Whirlpool of Life) draws its themes entirely from American life. However, although the characters of most of the stories are Jews

and Jewesses, there is little of typical Jewish life reflected in their actions and in the episodes portrayed. Only a few bear that mark. The themes are varied, and on the whole present the type of stories found in Yiddish and English daily newspapers and weeklies.

The collection contains a story about a young physician who, having opened an office, and outfitting it with the best of furniture and an attractive tablet bearing his name and degree, sits in the office long hours waiting for the first patient. Great joy is experienced by him and his wife when the bell rings and the cry "doctor" is heard. But disappointment ensues when he finds that the patient to whom he is called is a poor man who had fainted in the street and was brought to his home. On examining him, the physician pronounces him dead, and no fee can be collected. Another story with a resounding name, *This World and the World to Come*, tells of love in a funeral parlor. A girl, in search of a job, is offered one by the owners of a funeral parlor. She accepts the job, and although at first she is somewhat afraid of working with the dead, she gradually adjusts herself and even finds the job pleasant for she is treated well. And what is more, the younger of the two owners falls in love with her, and thus she obtains a permanent job as a wife.

Of the few stories which portray facets of Jewish life, *Neder* (*A Vow*) is outstanding. It reflects the sacredness of the Jewish tradition that one must make all efforts, including the sacrifice of his personal dignity, to fulfill a promise. In this story, Lippa, a venerable old man who is supported by his son, is called to the Torah on the Sabbath of the anniversary of his father's death (*Yahrzeit*), and donates the sum of three dollars to the little synagogue in which he prays. He is certain that his son will supply him with the required amount. But days pass and the *Neder* is not fulfilled, for circumstances change with the son. He loses his job and poverty enters the house. Poor Lippa pawns his silver snuff box, the only remnant of his former riches in Poland, but the money is needed for milk for the children. Lippa is greatly perturbed, and in his distress he decides to go out begging in order to raise the sum. For a week he pursues his work in hot summer days, and, penny by penny, he succeeds in accumulating two dollars. He grows weak, and breathing becomes difficult; but the vow is not yet fulfilled, and he continues to beg. One day, he faints in the street, and, when revived, he murmurs. "only twenty-five cents more." "What for," the astounded physician asks. "To fulfill my vow and pay the donation," he answers, and closes his eyes.

Blank displays much ability in his presentation of the stories. The events and actions are skillfully developed into a pleasing narrative which the reader can enjoy.

#### iv. REUBEN WALLINROD

Among the small number of writers of novels and short stories, Reuben Wallinrod has achieved a place of honor through the quantity and quality of his production. He has to his credit several novels and two collections of short stories. He possesses a keen eye for observation, skill in portrayal of actions and episodes, and psychological penetration into the soul of his characters. His *Derakim we-Derek* (Ways and A Way) is subtitled *Pirké Masa* (Chapters on Travel), but in reality it is a series of sketches and short stories portraying episodes of life in several countries, including Israel. Stopping in Paris on his way to Israel, he visits old haunts (Wallinrod lived there for several years), in search of a small restaurant which he once frequented. He sketches the restaurateur who has tried his hand at business and at literature, but was unsuccessful in both, and, in order to make a living, has opened a restaurant for Jewish visitors who came from the Ukraine, attempting to satisfy their various tastes by serving the foods they were used to. He, of course, never forgets that he is a writer and is therefore in great haste to serve his customers as if to assure them, says Wallinrod, that his literary aspirations will not affect the quality of the food. "What belongs to literature," he says, "is one thing, and what belongs to satisfying the stomach is another." The search for this restaurant is in vain.

The Israel sketches portray episodes and scenes of the new life in that land. Wallinrod, who saw life in Israel years before, records every change in that life, no matter how small. He notes a change in the houses of the German settlers, called *Yekes* in Israel. He says, "The heavy furniture and the portraits which were brought over from the fatherland are still there, and fill the small rooms to capacity. The heavy tomes of Goethe, Schiller, and Rilke in their beautiful bindings still fill the bookcases, but above them are seen thin books in drab bindings and in a strange script. These are Hebrew text-books and stories in that language, published by the United Kibbutz, *Am Obed*, and others. I believe," he continues, "that it will not take long and these later books will replace the earlier ones."

The story of his meeting an old friend whom he did not recog-

nize at first is very stirring. "Do you not know who I am," asks the friend? "I am Berele." And Wallinrod asks, "And where is your wife Zirele?" For a while, silence reigns, then Berele tells his sad tale. He had one daughter, Ruthie. She was twenty-one years old and went to Jerusalem to study. When the war broke out she joined the army and was killed. He, Berele, bears the pain silently, but Zirele could not stand the loss of their daughter. Every piece of ground shouts, "here Ruthie played, there she met her father coming home from work, on that hill she lay, and under this tree she read a book. Zirele could not stand the calls of the very ground, of the grass and flowers, and left the place. I cannot leave it."

His novels and stories of American Jewish life portray the various phases of that life with great skill. He is at his best in the collection of short stories, *Bein Homot New York* (Between the Walls of New York). In a number of these stories, he frequently employs the motif of contrast between people in several aspects. In one, it is the rift between parents and children because of the differences in the view of life and the range of intellectuality. In another, it is the contrast in the social position between two families whose children are about to marry. The father of the groom is a highly respected Shohet in Brooklyn, and the mother, a leader in the Women's Mizrachi movement, while the bride is the daughter of a tailor in a small town, and the stepmother, a simple woman. There is hostility between the families for some time, but ultimately some reconciliation is affected.

Another story portrays the friction between the families of two brothers, one of whom is the giver, and the other, the receiver. The receiver is a former jewelry dealer who was brought over in the days of terror from Belgium by the American brother. He and his family were accustomed to a rich way of life; the children are highly educated and speak French, German, and English; and the wife was a woman of society. They are greatly disappointed when they are brought to four simple rooms in Williamsburg. Is this America, they ask themselves. For a while, joy reigns at the reunion, but tension soon sets in, and frequent friction breaks out between the Belgian woman and the children of her sister-in-law who cannot stand her haughty demeanor. In all these stories, the portrayal by Wallinrod of the numerous episodes and events which he integrates is masterly.

Wallinrod also wrote a number of short stories devoted to the portrayal of Jewish life in the numerous hotels and inns in the Cat-

skill mountains where many New York Jews spend their summer vacations, in which humorous aspects of the life which take place during the short span of time are presented and well drawn.

## 50. ESSAYS AND CRITICISM

### i. JOSHUA OVSAY

The collection of essays, *Mamorim u-Reshimot* (Essays and Criticism) by Joshua Ovsay, an essayist and critic the bulk of whose activity was produced during the last twenty-five years, embraces learned essays, criticism, and publicistic articles. It is divided into four parts, each containing a number of essays.

In the first part, "In the Tents of Torah," the author deals with two subjects which received little attention in modern Hebrew literature, especially emanating from America. The first of these subjects is "Humor in the Talmud," in which the author displays mastery of Talmudic knowledge and offers an analysis of the nature and character of humor. He presents a classification of the types of humorous statements found in the Talmud—witty remarks made by scholars at the opening of their lectures in the Academies in order to put the students in a cheerful and receptive mood; parodies and satires on the conduct of the nations oppressing Israel; witticisms employed in religious debates; and humorous statements which aim to point at an ethical lesson. The classification and the numerous quotations present an evaluation of this literary aspect of the Talmud.

The second essay of this section offers a fine definitive portrayal of the life in the Talmudic Academies, or Yeshibot, in Lithuania during the first two decades of this century. It delineates the method of teaching; relations between students and teachers; the social life of the students; and the movements in these tents of Torah. Of the movements, one was the ethical-pietistic, known as *Musar*, led by the heads of the Academies, whose aim was to guard the students against non-religious trends in the outside world. The other was the movement among groups of students striving to modernize the Yeshibot, widen their horizons by introducing the study of secular subjects, and arouse participation in the national revival.

In the second part, the subject of the essays is again one which was little dealt with in modern Hebrew literature, namely the portrayal of the personalities of great Talmudic scholars, heads of Yeshibot, and Rabbinic leaders. In the essays we learn much about the vigor of their intellectual life, their devotion to Torah and its study,

and their love for their students. The delineations are illustrated with stories heard in the halls of learning and with records of the author's personal experiences during his attendance at a number of Yeshibot. As a result, the life and activities of these great men are fully illuminated.

The third part, which occupies about half of the work, is devoted to the evaluation of the literary contributions of a large number of Hebrew writers and their works. Ovsay is more of a literary interpreter than a critic, for he endeavors to find the marks of originality in the works of each writer he deals with. Of special interest is the essay on the belletristic literature dealing with the life of the Kibbutz. He points out that the reflection of that life in the stories is of a double nature, positive and negative. Not all of them portray it as a realization of a great ideal, but some point out the shadowy aspect of that life as well.

The last section contains short essays and articles, a number of which are publicistic dealing with various subjects related to American Jewish life, especially in its spiritual aspect, such as the lack of public opinion, the multitude of celebrations, the place of the Hebrew writer in this country, the type and character of the readers of Hebrew, and others, all of which throw some sparks of light on the multi-phased Jewish life.

Judging the work as a whole, we can say that it has permanent value, for it sheds light upon important phases of the spiritual aspect of a life which is gone; and that the author displays fine interpretative ability and good taste in the discussions of modern Hebrew literature, and also judges fairly several aspects of American Jewish life.

## ii. ZEBI SCHARFSTEIN

Zebi Scharfstein, whose literary activity in the field of Jewish education was discussed in the preceding volume, continued to write on this subject during the period covered by this edition. A collection of such essays, *Kium we-Hinuch* (Survival and Education) was recently published by him. In these essays he discusses many aspects of the state of Jewish education in this country with the skill of a man who devoted a great part of his life to Jewish pedagogy. He emphasizes the need for making the knowledge of the Hebrew language one of the leading aims in the curriculum of the Hebrew school, and opposes the view of some younger American Jewish educators who advocate the teaching of Jewish subjects in the school by

the method of translation into English. Hebrew, says he, is the most efficient means for maintaining the unity of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, and the value of its knowledge is especially necessary at present with the rise of the Jewish State where Hebrew is the language of the people. The cultivation of its knowledge is the bridge between the Diaspora and the Jewish State. Other essays deal with the program of studies, with the future of the afternoon school, known as the *Talmud Torah*, the study of Jewish history in the Hebrew schools, and with other subjects, all of which throw light on the problem of problems in American Jewish life—Jewish education.

Although the book is entitled *Survival and Education*, it also deals with some philological studies of the Hebrew language and with literary criticism. The first is devoted to the element of onomatopoeia in Hebrew and its use in literature, especially in poetry, and also to a survey of books dealing with Hebrew synonyms. He presents a list of words which seem to indicate that their origin is onomatopoeic, namely imitation of the voices of animals or the sounds of nature. The second deals primarily with the belletristic works of S. Agnon (see Volume IV, p. 187). He offers a lucid interpretation of several novels and short-story collections of this gifted writer and brings out forcibly the excellence of both the narrative and the style.

### iii. MAISLISCH, ROSENTHAL, MALACHI, AND PERSKY

Of the other essayists there are to be noted M. Maislisch, Judah Rosenthal, A. R. Malachi, and Daniel Persky. The first is the editor of the Hebrew Weekly, *Hadoar*, and as such, his frequent lengthy editorials deal with all leading problems of Jewish life. Many of these editorials are short literary essays. From time to time, he turns to criticism in his reviews of books published in the *Hadoar*. All his writings are distinguished by excellence of style and by depth of thought, for Maislisch is a philosopher as well as an essayist and publicist. His two-volume philosophical Hebrew work, *Mahshavah we-Emet* (Thought and Truth), which was later translated into English, was evaluated at length in the preceding volume (pp. 1268-78).

The second, Judah Rosenthal, is a prolific essayist and critic of scholarly works, primarily in Hebrew, but also in Yiddish and English. He has to his credit a work on Hivi Al-Balkhi, a ninth-century Bible critic, to whose criticism the Gaon Saadia devoted a book of

refutation. His essays cover a number of fields—history, biblical exegesis, liturgy, religious debates, and kindred subjects.

Of interest are his essays: *Aspects of Jewish History during the Second Commonwealth Period*; *The Development of the Siddur*; *The Development of the Maḥsor and the Sacred Poetry It Contains*; *Lending Money on Interest to Gentiles* (all in Hebrew); *Ninth-Century Karaite Commentators of the Bible*; *Critical Tendencies in Biblical Exegesis in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries* (Yiddish); and *The Talmud on Trial* (English), in which he discusses the role of the Talmud in religious debates. In all these, as well as in numerous other essays, Rosenthal displays the result of research and a sound grasp of the subjects he deals with.

A. R. Malachi is a prolific essayist on historical and literary subjects. He is also the author of a collection of essays on a number of modern Hebrew writers which was discussed in the preceding volume. His many scattered essays written during the last decade dealing with numerous historical episodes and aspects of literary history illuminate the subjects discussed. Of importance is his series of essays on events and episodes in the history of Palestinian Jewry during the nineteenth century, especially of the Jerusalem community. A scholarly lexicographical work of his is discussed elsewhere in the volume.

The fourth is Daniel Persky, master of the light humorous essay or feulliton which has been published every week in the *Hadoar* for the last twenty-five years. In this department, he comments humorously on the various events and episodes in present day Jewish life.

However, he is not always so light; frequently there crops out from the humorous comments lines saturated with contemplation and thought which make readers stop and reflect. Several small collections of these feullitons were published, but he is at his best in the last collection, *Kol Moed* (The Voice of the Holidays). These essays are comments, written in a humorous vein, on the nature and character of the various holidays and semi-holidays in the Jewish year.

As an illustration, he says, "In the prayer, *Abinu Malkenu*, recited during the ten days of awe, we plead, 'Write us in the book of maintenance and sustenance.' Why must it be written down? Does God forget?" But, says he, the meaning is thus, "give us, O God, the possibility to learn and study books and also sustenance," for usually the two do not go together. In regard to the holiday of Shebuot, he



asks, why is it called the day of the giving of the Torah and not the day of receiving the Torah? The answer is, the giving lasted only one morning, but the receiving took millennia, and in fact, we are still struggling with the reception of the Torah. Such and other thoughtful remarks are scattered throughout the collection.

v. A. S. ORLEANS

A. S. Orleans, a veteran publicist, has specialized in writing short essays in the form of editorials for the last thirty-five years for the Hebrew Weekly, *Hadoar*. His themes are, as a rule, discussions of social, political, and economic questions, and their reflection in Jewish life. As a professional economist, his editorials clarify the economic background of timely problems. He possesses a flowing style tinged with a note of humor. He is also quite daring in taking a stand in controversial Jewish problems, and in all his writings discloses a search for the truth. Due to his active publicistic experience and the nature and character of his editorials, he occupies an important place among the American Hebrew publicists.

## CHAPTER XII

### JEWISH LEARNING AND THOUGHT

#### 51. GRAMMAR AND LEXICOGRAPHY

##### i. WILLIAM CHOMSKY

An attempt to present what may be termed a survey of the history and development of the Hebrew language was made by William Chomsky in *Hebrew, the Eternal Language*.

His introduction discusses the relation of language to race and culture and points out the advantage of Hebrew in this relation, for it is the language of Judaism which expresses the combined spirit of a nation, its religion, and its millennial culture. He illustrates its uniqueness by quoting such expressions as *Kiddush he-Shem* (Sanctification of the Name of God) and *Hillul ha-Shem* (Desecration of the Name). These are not words, but clusters of concepts which epitomize martyrology through the ages, delineate the proper conduct of life, and condemn any deviation from it. He then discusses its place among languages, especially among the other Semitic languages, its uniformity, and the various names it bore.

That Hebrew was considered the mother of languages is quite well known, for it is stated in the Bible, and consequently it was considered to be so by both Jews and Christians. The author points out that even as late as 1642, a thesis was presented at Harvard College which endeavored to prove that Hebrew is really the mother of all languages. From the point of view of science, however, it is one of a group of Semitic languages. Chomsky therefore presents a table representing the place Hebrew holds as a branch of the Western Canaanite division. He delineates the various influences which other Semitic languages, such as Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian, had exerted upon Hebrew, and traces the origin of a number of Hebrew words to these languages.

As for the name "Hebrew," he points out that while those who

spoke it were called Hebrews, the prophet Jonah said: "Ibri Onoki" (I am a Hebrew, Jonah, I:9); the wife of Potiphar calls Joseph the Hebrew slave (Genesis, XXXIV:18); the Bible calls the language *Sfat Canaan* (The Language of Canaan, Isaiah, XIX:18) and *Yehudit* (Isaiah, XXXII:13 and 2 Kings, XVIII: 27-28). The first time that the language is referred to as "Hebrew" is in the *Book of Jubilees* written in the third century B.C.E. Later, however, "Hebrew" was used quite frequently, especially in Medieval literature. There is another name mentioned in the Talmud and in the Rabbinic literature, *Lashon ha-Kodesh* (The Holy Language). This name was applied in order to emphasize its value, and one's duty to cultivate a knowledge of it. Chomsky also points out the vigor of the rhythm, and the poetic quality of biblical Hebrew and comes to the conclusion that such style could not be typical of the daily language of the masses. There must therefore have been two trends in that language in those days, the classical and the conversational.

In another chapter, he discusses the extra-biblical Hebrew documents, such as the Gezer calendar discovered in 1908, the stone inscription by Mesha, the King of Moab (2 Kings, III:4), the Shiloah inscription dating from the time of Hezekiah, and the Lachish letters discovered recently which date from the time of Jeremiah, and, finally, the Ugaritic poems which go back to the fourteenth century B.C.E. All these documents shed light upon the orthography and grammar of the language of the Bible. They also contain many new words and expressions which, though not found in the Bible, were part of the vocabulary of the spoken Hebrew.

A chapter is devoted to the development of the forms of Hebrew script. Its old form, the one called *Ketab Ibri* (Hebrew Script), in the Talmud, was an adaptation of the alphabet used in Canaan. From the time of Ezra, another form, which the Talmud called *Ketab Ashuri* (Assyrian Script), a form of the widespread Aramaic script, was introduced. This script has been used since that time, and is also called the square script, for most of the letters are square in form. The old form, though, was not entirely given up. It was used on the coins issued by the Hasmonean Kings, and books written in that script were found among the scrolls discovered in the Qumran Cave near the Dead Sea.

The author then goes on to a delineation of the development of the vowel system, for during many centuries it was primarily a consonantal language. We are told that at first the four letters, *Alef, He,*

*Vow*, and *Yud* were designated as vowels, but the Massorites later introduced a system of vowels of which there were originally three forms, the Babylonian, the Palestinian, and the Tiberian, which differed both in the form of the vowels and their place. The first two placed the vowel signs on top of the letters, while the Tiberian, the accepted one, places most of them below. The others are found in several manuscripts.\*

Other chapters present a survey of the development of Hebrew grammar from the time of Saadia to modern times, as well as a discussion of the way the text of the Bible was preserved, emphasizing the great labor of the scribes (*Soferim*) and the Massorites in guarding the integrity of the text. In fact, the author wonders at its uniformity, for not even the Samaritan text, or the one which lay before the translators of the Septuagint, differ much from that of the Massoretic; the variations in a number of readings do not indicate great changes in the text.

Still other chapters of this work delineate the growth of Hebrew. It began with the rise of Mishnaic Hebrew in which Chomsky sees an evolutionary form of the Hebrew vernacular. Dealing, as the Mishnah does, with a large number of broad subjects, there was an intense need for an increased and expanded vocabulary. As a result, words were borrowed from the Aramaic or even from the Greek, but were Hebraized and became a part of the Hebrew language. New terms and expressions were coined, and new usages introduced, thus increasing the scope of the language. It was further expanded during the Medieval period, especially during the Golden Age in Spain, when many terms were borrowed from the Arabic and new words coined. The author gives numerous illustrations of the way the coinage was carried on and new nuances introduced into old words. He continues the story of the expansion during the twentieth century and shows how Hebrew ultimately became a spoken language, and illustrates it by discussing hundreds of new terms and expressions, as well as the various linguistic devices used for the purpose of that expansion.

His last two chapters describe the struggle to revive Hebrew as a spoken language, initiated by Eliezer ben Yehudah and carried on during the last fifty years. In addition, he discusses the spread of Hebrew in America and the literature produced in that language.

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\* Cf. Volume I of this history, Book II, Section 92; "Vowels and accents."

The value of the work is greatly heightened by the numerous illustrations culled from inscriptions and manuscripts.

ii. *Mikhlol*

Another contribution to the knowledge of Hebrew and its appreciation is Chomsky's translation from the Hebrew into English of one of the standard works on Hebrew grammar, the *Mikhlol*, by the famous Medieval grammarian and biblical commentator, David Kimḥi (1160-1235). It is not just a translation, but is an attempt to recast the entire material and reorganize it in the order and terms of modern grammatical works. Stray grammatical remarks scattered in various chapters have been gathered and placed where they logically belong. Likewise, since there is a rearrangement of the original work, it becomes necessary to distinguish between what is of primary importance and what is of lesser importance. The translator, therefore, made the former stand out conspicuously, while the latter he relegated to notes designated by the letters of the alphabet to distinguish them from his own.

Of special value are the notes of the translator designated by Arabic numerals which cover close to one hundred and fifty pages. These notes, as far as was possible, trace the sources from which Kimḥi drew material for his work, and thus help the student gain an understanding of the development of grammatical thinking prior to Kimḥi. But there is really more to these numerous and at times lengthy notes, for they also offer explanations and clarifications of the grammatical theories of Kimḥi's predecessors as well as corrections in the texts of the passages quoted, either by the translator himself or by other scholars.

The work offers the student the opportunity to acquire a wider and deeper knowledge of Hebrew grammar.

iii. A. R. MALACHI

A work entitled *Oẓar ha-Lexigrap̄hia he-Ibrit* (A Treasury of Hebrew Lexicography) was written by A. R. Malachi. It is divided into two parts; the first contains a short history of Hebrew lexicography from the time of Saadia Gaon, the first Hebrew lexicographer, in the tenth century, to the twentieth century. This part covers all important lexicographical works, biblical and Talmudic concordances and dictionaries, complete or limited to certain aspects, and works on synonyms. In addition to the description of the scope

of the works, particulars of the lives of the authors are given, the various editions noted, and of the more important works, excerpts are included.

The second section is a bibliography of the works on Hebrew lexicography, containing three hundred eighty-eight items, three hundred and eight with Hebrew titles, and eighty with titles in Latin or other languages. The languages in which the Hebrew words and terms are translated include not only all European languages, but also Latin, Arabic, Greek, and Persian. This work testifies to much research, and it will be invaluable to the student of Hebrew. It was not, however, published as a separate work, but was appended to a new edition of the large biblical concordance, *Hekal ha-Kodesh* (The Sacred Palace), by Solomon Mandelkern, re-published in this country in 1955.

## 52. BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

### i. ROBERT GORDIS

*Kohleth, the Man and His World*, by Robert Gordis presents the literary value of the content of the Book of Kohleth, or Ecclesiastes, portrays the character of the author and his world, and offers an English translation and a commentary. After surveying in the first chapter the extensive Wisdom literature, both of Egypt and Babylonia, the works of which antedated the emergence of Hebrew culture by many centuries, Gordis comes to the conclusion that these works served as a frame for Hebrew Wisdom literature which undoubtedly began to flourish as soon as the monarchy was established. In fact, following Cassutto and Kaufmann, the author asserts that this literary current was already well developed during the period of the First Temple, and formed the third link in the literary activity of the period of which the Torah and the prophetic writings were the other two. As proof of that, we have the testimony of the Bible itself, for it is said there that, "Solomon excelled the wisdom of the children of the East, and that he spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five" (1 Kings, X:12). Gordis then avers that while the actual authorship of proverbs and songs by Solomon may be doubted, yet the statement indicates great activity in the field of Wisdom literature.

Unfortunately, most of these earlier works disappeared, but he admits the exception of a large part of the Book of Proverbs. He therefore posits that the Golden Age of Hebrew Wisdom was in the

first half of the Second Commonwealth, from the fifth to the second century B.C.E. His main argument for this view is due to the change in the fortune of the Jewish people from an independent nation to one subjected to foreign rule. Little hope was then entertained for immediate attainment of national greatness, and attention was mainly centered upon the individual and the path he should follow to attain happiness. Relying upon a statement in *Wisdom of Ben Sira*—"turn aside to me, ye fools, and tarry in my house of study"—our author concludes that in this period Ben Sira was not the only one who maintained an academy for the teaching of wisdom, but one of many. Furthermore, he asserts that the environment reflected in *Wisdom* literature is of the wealthy classes, and that the morality inculcated by it is primarily utilitarian, and the virtues to be cultivated are diligence, prudence, restraint in speech, and loyalty to authority. The religious ideas reflected therein are also those of the upper conservative class, for it stresses that virtue leads to well-being and vice to poverty, and that wealth is a gift of God to the upright.

All these remarks and statements are adduced in order to project the main outlines of the world of the author of *Koheleth*, as well as the leading traits of his own character, for he, as well as the book, were products of Jewish life during these centuries. In fact, Gordis points to more constricting limitations in establishing the production date of the book. But before stating them, he attempts to show that the tradition of Solomonic authorship cannot be maintained.

The main argument against such authorship is that the book reflects the standpoint of a commoner and not that of a king. It bewails the oppression of the weak, arraigns the government for corruption, and displays fear of royal authority. To these, says he, we may add that the Hebrew style of the book is that of the first half of the Second Commonwealth period, as the multiplicity of Aramaisms employed, as well as the construction of sentences, and the use of words rare in the Bible but in vogue in the *Mishnah*, bear evidence. Gordis also rejects the views of certain scholars that *Koheleth*, the author, was influenced by Greek or Egyptian thought and that the book reflects that influence. He thus approaches the approximate date of the book. It could not, says he, have been written later than the end of the third century B.C.E., for the work of Ben Sira, which was written in 190 B.C.E., shows evidence that its author was acquainted with the Book of *Koheleth*. And since some time must pass before a book can attain popularity in order to be accepted in the Canon

of the Scriptures, it is best to allow its precedence to Ben Sira's work by half a century or a little more, and fix its date at 250 B.C.E.

Gordis, after charting the world of Koheleth, fixing as near as possible the date of the Book and to a degree its originality, comes to his main task, namely to delineate the personality of Koheleth, the author. He makes him first of all a teacher, or master, of a Wisdom Academy, a man of wealth, and a member of the upper class, for he tells us of his riches, the many servants he possessed, and the pleasures he enjoyed (II:1-11). Gordis also assumes that he was a bachelor for he frequently deplors the fact that a man must leave his wealth to strangers. He also, says Gordis, believes in God and His rule of the world, for he advises the people to attend Temple service reverently. Were he only endowed with these traits and his material possessions, he could have been happy, but there are other traits in his personality which precipitate a struggle in his soul and bring about unhappiness.

He loves life extremely, he also loves justice and truth, and above all, he is endowed with a clear eye and keen insight into the vicissitudes of life. Looking closely upon the scenes which life presents, he falls into despair. He sees injustice prevalent, the wicked prosper, and the righteous suffer. He is lost in his search for the meaning of God's rule of the world. No amount of wisdom can fathom that rule. Consequently, Gordis believes that in the depth of his heart, Koheleth doubts whether there is full justice in that rule, but he hesitates to express his doubts openly and screens them by using expressions which apparently subscribe to belief, but in reality contain an entirely different meaning. The meaning, according to our author, is that not only is it advisable to follow a hedonistic way of life, but that to enjoy life is even commanded by God, and the man who fails to attain such happiness is a fool and a Hote, a sinner.

That Koheleth continues to advise the enjoyment of life is true, for it stems from his extreme love of life, but that he considers it a command of God is questionable, but space does not allow a lengthier discussion. This view of Koheleth, the man, moved Gordis to find support for it in his commentary, and accordingly he interprets a number of verses in a manner which fits in with the conception of his view. We will quote one interpretation. Chapter II:26 reads: "for to the man that is good in His sight, he giveth wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner, He giveth the task to gather and to heap up that he may leave to him that is good in the sight



of God." Gordis finds fault with this simple verse and asks why does Koheleth not use the term *Zaddik* but the words "good in His sight." He therefore explains it in accordance with his theory that to Koheleth enjoyment of life is the command of God and the one who follows it is "good in His sight, while the one who does not follow that path is a sinner and is even punished. It is a strange view for a book included in the Canon of the Holy Bible.

Judging the work as a whole, we can say that the commentary offers plausible explanations for difficult verses, and the discussions display a wide range of reading, knowledge of Hebrew grammar and biblical exegesis, and much ingenuity.

### 53. TALMUDICS

#### i. LOUIS GINZBERG

Great activity was displayed by American Jewish scholars during the last quarter-century in the field of Talmudics, Jewish Law, and Rabbinics. A number of works were produced, the outstanding of which is the work of the late Professor Louis Ginzberg, the great master in this field, *Perushim we-Hidushim be-Yerushalmi* (Comments and Explanations of Chapters in the Jerusalem Talmud). As the subtitle, "Studies in the Development of Halakah," indicates, it is not a mere commentary, but aims to present the leading aspects of two fields of Jewish literature, Halakah and Agada, by discussing the content of a part of one tractate of the Palestinian Talmud. The wide range of the discussions and the commentation and the great erudition they display can be gauged from the fact that while they are limited to the first three chapters of the tractate *Berakot*, they extend over twelve hundred pages.

It is enough to glance at only a few of the titles of the subjects discussed in the work—the development of the institution of prayer and its various texts; the differences in the view of the two schools, of Shammai and Hillel; the different customs prevalent in Judea and in Galilee; and differences in the reading of the Torah on the Sabbaths and holidays in Palestine and Babylonia—all of which are treated at great length, to be convinced of the exceptional importance of this work.

Of great value are the two introductions, one in Hebrew and one in English, which are appended to this work. The Hebrew introduction, intended primarily for scholars, deals with a number of subjects which can be properly comprehended only by students of the Pales-

tinian Talmud, while the one in English is of a general nature. It was later included in a volume published posthumously entitled *Jewish Law and Lore*.

In this introduction, after presenting a general survey of the development of the interpretation, of the Scriptures which resulted in two great literary streams, Halakah and Agada, Ginzberg turns to a description of the difference between the two Talmuds, the Babylonian and the Palestinian.

He first notes the linguistic differences. The Palestinian Talmud is written in the West-Aramaic dialect, and the Babylonian employs the East-Aramaic; the former contains many Greek words, while the foreign words in the Babylonian Talmud are primarily Persian. He then delineates the differences in the ways of life and modes of thought as reflected in the two Talmuds. Thus, we find that while the laws regarding the priestly and Levitical gifts, such as the heave offering (*Terumah*) and tithes, were observed in Palestine even after the destruction of the Temple, for their observance is insisted upon in the Palestinian Talmud, they were not observed in Babylonia, as many statements in the Babylonian Talmud indicate. We note a similar difference in the attitudes to the observance of certain laws of impurity, especially the one which prohibits the reading of the Torah or the recitation of the *Shema* while one is in a state of impurity. The Mishnah and the Palestinian Talmud insists on such observance, but in the Babylonian Talmud we find the statement: "words of the Torah are not affected by impurity."

There are also, according to Ginzberg, important differences in the two Talmuds in regard to many points in civil law as well as in family laws. According to the Mishnah and the Palestinian Talmud, in sales in which either the buyer or the seller is cheated of a sum equal to one-sixth of the price of the object sold, the injured party may annul the transaction; but the Babylonian Talmud declares the sale valid although the sum of which he was defrauded must be returned. It is only when the amount exceeds one-sixth can the sale be invalidated by the injured party. Similarly, we note a flexibility in the Babylonian Talmud in regard to charging of interest. It allows the lender when the loan is secured by a pledge of landed property the use of that property until the debt is repaid. It also allows a merchant to charge a higher price for goods than the market price, when payment is deferred for a later date provided that he does not tell the buyer "you can get it cheaper if you pay me now." The Palestin-

ian Talmud forbids both things. Only in one case is the Babylonian Talmud more severe. According to the Mishnah and the Palestinian Talmud, one who borrows on interest, though he is considered a transgressor, is not disqualified from bearing witness in a suit, but the Babylonian Talmud extends such disqualification to both lender and borrower.

Ginzberg explains and equates differences to those of the economic status of the Jewries. The Palestinian economy was based on agriculture, and Jews were, on the whole, poor, while the basis of the economy of the Babylonian Jewry was commerce, and a number of Jews attained wealth. Cheating in commerce, to a certain degree, is accepted and tolerated, likewise it is usual to sell goods at a somewhat higher price if paid at a later date, or to make use of a security when it is for a long-time loan. The severity in regard to disqualifications of a borrower from bearing witness is also attributed to economic status. The Palestinian farmer borrowed money because of great need, and though he is a transgressor, he cannot be suspected of bearing false witness, while the Babylonian merchant may borrow in order to increase his profits, and he may be suspected of committing another transgression in his greed.

Ginzberg also points out other differences, such as few references in the Palestinian Talmud to the activities of the angels as mediators between man and God; to sorcery and magical acts; to its avoidance of the name *Shedim* for demons (they are called *Masikim*, those who cause damage). But in the Babylonian Talmud all these things are dealt with frequently, and the name *Shedim* is prevalent in it. He attributes the difference in these matters to the influence exerted by Zoroastrionism upon the life of the masses, and at times even on the views of the scholars.

As for the time of the composition of the Palestinian Talmud, the author asserts that it began in Caesarea, in the middle of the fourth century, but was then limited only to the material of the first three tractates of the fourth order, *Nesikin*, which deals primarily with civil law. He claims that this arrangement, which is distinguished for its brevity, was undertaken in order to supply a guide for judges, mostly non-Jews, who wanted to consult the Jewish law in their decisions. A half-century later, the other parts were arranged, but not completed, covering only thirty-nine tractates out of the sixty-three tractates of the Mishnah.

Ginzberg also discusses the measure of interest taken by scholars

in that Talmud, its spread, and the number of commentaries on it as well as their character. It is unnecessary to stress the value of the introduction, for it offers an objective survey of a great work which unfortunately is little known even to most Talmudic students.

In another essay contained in the work on *Jewish Law and Lore*, called "The Significance of the Halakah for Jewish History," Ginzberg offers a reason similar to the one offered above, this time not economic, but social. It is offered in order to explain a controversy about a certain practice in the Temple which had lasted for over a century among the scholars known as the Pairs, i.e., the two who headed the Sanhedrin, one as president, and the other as dean. He posits first that among the Pharasaic scholars there were two groups—a conservative, representing the upper and aristocratic stratum, and a progressive, representing the other strata. He applies the same explanation to many other Halakic controversies between the schools of Shammai and Hillel assuming that the Shammaites were the conservatives while the Hillelites were progressive. It is, of course, understood that the strata differed in economic status as well. Combining both the social and economic factors, Ginzberg succeeds in explaining a number of legal controversies. The controversies are too complicated to be illustrated, for they deal primarily with laws which became obsolete with the destruction of the Temple, but the attempt is ingenious and of interest to everyone who wants to increase his knowledge of the Talmudic literature.

## ii. LOUIS FINKELSTEIN

A contribution in the same field was made by Louis Finkelstein in issuing a copy of a Vatican manuscript text of one of the leading Halakic Midrashim, known as the *Sifra* on the Book of Leviticus. It is one of the rare manuscripts of that Midrash, for it is vocalized, a thing unusual in Talmudic texts. And what is more, the vocalization, following the Babylonian system, places the vowel signs on top of the letters instead of below as in the adopted one, the Tiberian. The use of this system of vocalization points to Babylonia as the place where it was written and to its early date, the seventh or the eighth century, before the Babylonian vocalization system was displaced by the Tiberian.

The editor prefaced a long introduction in which he attempts to prove the value of the text. He points to passages in the printed edition of the *Sifra*, which almost all commentators find difficult to

explain, due to words or expressions which impart a certain meaning to the passages. But on examining the readings in this manuscript we find that the difficulty disappears. It follows therefore that this text is a more correct one.

### iii. SAUL LIBERMAN

Another great contribution in the field of Talmudics is the new edition of the order *Zeraim* of the Tosefta with an extensive commentary by Professor Saul Liberman. The Tosefta is second in importance to the Mishnah and is one of the foundations of the entire Talmudic literature.\* A correct text of this work is a necessity for a complete knowledge of both Halakah and Agada. Professor Liberman, in preparation of his edition, examined many manuscripts and finally based his edition on the Vienna manuscript which seems to be the best as compared with others and with the printed editions.

Of special importance is his commentary on the Tosefta which, by explaining difficult passages and comparing parallel Halakot and Agadic statements scattered in other leading Talmudic works, throws light not only upon the Tosefta, but upon many parts of the Mishnah, Gemarah, and the Tannaitic Midrashim. However, the extensive commentary is intended primarily for scholars; but in order to open the Tosefta for wider use, a special edition of the first order was prepared by Professor Liberman in which the same text is given together with a short commentary explaining difficult expressions and passages.

Of great interest to the students of the Talmud, as well as to those of Jewish history, are the other two works of Professor Saul Liberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, which illuminate Jewish life in that country, especially in its social, economic, and cultural aspects during the period extending from the second to the end of the fourth centuries.

The primary purpose of the first work is to show that the Jews of Palestine at that time did not lead an isolated life, but were well acquainted with the Greek language and its literature, with the law of the land—at that time, Roman law—and its technicalities, as well as with the Roman world. In short, the Jews of Palestine in those centuries were well adjusted to their environment.

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\* Cf. on the Tosefta, Volume I, p. 83f.

He proves all these points by citing references to Jewish life in the Talmudic literature of the period. As for the prevalence of the use and study of Greek by the Jews, he quotes a statement of the Patriarch Simeon, the son of Gamliel, which is found in several places in Tannaitic works. It reads: "there were one thousand young men in my father's house; five hundred devoted themselves to the study of the Torah only, and the other five hundred studied Greek wisdom." Liberman finds in this statement evidence of the existence of a special academy connected with the house of the Patriarch where Greek literature was studied. We can therefore assume that among the upper stratum of Jewish society, the knowledge and pursuit of Greek literature and science was quite prevalent. But since there is always a desire on the part of the lower classes to imitate the higher, it is certain that this knowledge penetrated all classes.

That the Greek language and its literature, as well as legal terms and technical expressions designating ways of business transactions and other forms of life and culture were well known to the rabbis and used by them in their legal discussions, homilies, and ethical teachings, the author demonstrates from numerous quotations drawn from all Talmudic works of the period. In these quotations the Greek words and phrases contained in them usually baffled the commentators of the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Midrashim, for their ignorance of Greek and its literature prevented them from grasping their real meaning. Liberman explains them with great erudition and shows how extensive the knowledge of the rabbis was, not only of the Greek language, but also of its many-sided literature, touching upon various aspects of life. He also devotes several pages to the special mastery of the Greek language, its literature and its style by leading Tannaim and Amoraim which he proves with numerous quotations from their statements. Among these he counts Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanos and Joshua ben Hannanyah, to whom, according to a statement in the Palestinian Talmud, Aquila presented his translation of the Bible into Greek for approval. They praised it highly, quoting Psalms XLV; 3: "thou art fairer than the children of men." Such praises, says he, could not be uttered unless the scholars were masters of Greek style and could appreciate the exactness of the translation.

However, says Liberman, the knowledge of Greek and even its literature was not limited to the rabbis, but even the man in the street was acquainted with it, and at times even recited his prayers in

that language. A number of references to recitation of the prayers are quoted by him from the Palestinian Talmud. Besides, says he, how could we explain the numerous Greek words and phrases, some of which refer to historical events or popular adages which were part of the homilies delivered in the synagogue, if the audiences were not acquainted with them. In fact, says he, we have to assume that they were used in order to help the listeners grasp the content of the homily which was delivered in Aramaic. Moreover, Greek penetrated even into the inscriptions on tombstones. Of those discovered on the old cemetery in Jaffa, sixty are in Greek and only six in Aramaic or Hebrew.

In a section entitled "Pleasures and Fears," the author deals with numerous references in Talmudic literature to various athletic activities which were carried on in the land, on the one hand, and to customs, the origin of which rests in superstitions, which were adopted by the Jewish masses from their neighbors, on the other. In the case of the former, while the rabbis were not admirers of sports, yet they did not forbid it, but tried to limit their practice on the Sabbath and holidays. As for the customs, when convinced that these could not be eradicated altogether, they Judaized them by offering reasons which bear a Jewish character for their practice. In another section, Liberman discusses various substitutes for oaths and vows prescribed by law. This was done because of fear of pronouncing the original forms of vows and oaths. There was also the factor of imitation of their neighbors who swore by any object. There was a difference of opinion among the rabbis as to whether such substitutes should be recognized as binding or not. Some strongly opposed their use.

The section on Greek and Latin proverbs found in Rabbinic literature, which shows a surprisingly large number of proverbs common to all the three literatures is of special interest. Even proverbs commonly quoted by every student of the Talmud, such as "the wine belongs to the master, but thanks are due to the waiter"; or "a pot heated by several people is neither cold nor warm"; as well as many others, were extensively employed by Greek and Roman writers. It, of course, does not indicate direct borrowing by the rabbis, for anyone acquainted with the subject knows the migrant tendency of proverbs, but it shows how well adjusted the Jewish scholars were to the cultural climate of their neighbors.

The final chapter treats of a large number of words and expres-

sions in Talmudic literature which were misunderstood by commentators. Liberman defines them and clarifies the meaning of the passages.

The second work pursues the same purpose, but, as the author says, the subject is wider. It embraces not only linguistic problems as in the first work, but inquires into the customs, manners, beliefs, and views of the prevalent environment which are referred to in the numerous remarks of the sages of the Talmud and Midrash. He discusses the text of the Scriptures used by the rabbis in the early period, and the attempts made to introduce some changes in it. There are, as is known, the *Keri* and *Ketib*, namely words written in one way and read differently; corrections known as *Tikuné Soferim* (Corrections by the Scribes) which changed forms of verbs and nouns in order not to express an irreverent conception concerning God, and the critical marks expressed either by placing signs before and after certain verses, or dotting a number of words. While Liberman does not assert that the rabbis were in any way influenced by the outside world in the introduction of such changes and signs and in their interpretation of their significance, he endeavors to show by many quotations that a similar method was adopted also by Greek scholars in the treatment of classical texts.

He then turns to examine the methods of interpretation of the Scriptures employed by the rabbis in both Halakic and Agadic discussions based on the thirteen measures (Midot) or rules. Here, too, he admits that there is no ground to assume that the logical rules were borrowed from the Greeks, yet he makes great endeavor to prove that at least the term for one rule, namely the *Gesera Shave*, which posits that when two verses use the same expression, though the subject may differ, it follows that a certain aspect of a law applies to both subjects, corresponding exactly to a Greek term used in sense of comparison. It is therefore possible that the rabbinic term was modeled after that of the Greek.

Other discussions follow, among them the interpretation of dreams as they are stated in the Talmud, which he compares with those mentioned in Hellenic literature, and he finds many parallels. Similarly, he finds a likeness between the pagan and Jewish pre-sacrificial practices, and also traces the Greek origin of certain customs in the adorning of animals intended for sacrifice, such as gilding the horns of the oxen in the popular festival of bringing the first fruits. He also



points to certain practices which penetrated into the Temple itself from the outside world, but were abolished by the High Priest, John Hyrkanos. He notes certain other practices in the Temple similar to those followed in pagan places of worship, such as the way of entering and leaving—and the change in that way by mourners.\*

Looking on the works as a whole, we find that the effort made in the second work to show the place of Palestinian Jewry in the Hellenic world is at times somewhat strained, yet the value of the studies is not diminished. Both works throw much light on Jewish life, especially on its relation to the environment in its various aspects. Of great significance is the clarification by Liberman of hundreds of passages in the entire Talmudic and Midrashic literature. Of importance from a purely Jewish scholarly point of view are the studies on the rabbinic interpretation of the Scriptures and the publication of the Mishnah. The first contributes much to a better understanding of certain aspects of Agada, and the second offers a short but embracing account of the formation of the various layers of the Mishnah and the way it was published.

#### iv. BOAZ COHEN

A work of importance in the field of Tannaitic literature is *Mishnah and Tosefta*, by Boaz. Cohen. Its purpose is to describe the relation between these two great Halakic collections, and thus throw light upon the character of both. He selected for a detailed examination the Mishnah and Tosefta of the tractate *Shabbat*. The examination is preceded by an introduction which contains three chapters.

The first deals with the Mishnah, its compilation and method of edition; the second, with Halakic statements scattered through the Talmud and known as *Baraitot*, and the third with the Tosefta.

In his discussion of the Mishnah, he is very critical of the view of many scholars who posited that Judah the Prince, editor of the Mishnah, used the Mishnah of Rabbi Meir as the foundation of his work. The basis of such assertion is the statement of Rabbi Yohanan that all anonymous Halakic statements in Judah's Mishnah are taken from the Mishnah of Rabbi Meir. Cohen questions the authenticity of the statement by offering proof from Talmudic statements that it was not accepted by the scholars known as the *Amoraim*, who interpreted the Mishnah. He comes to the conclusion that Judah gathered the

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\* Cf. tractate *Midot* Ch. II, Mishnah 2.

material for the Mishnah from many earlier Halakic collections, and no particular collection can be considered its foundation.

In regard to *Baraitot*, he points out that these were small collections of Halakic material which were omitted from the Mishnah, and generally were arranged according to the subject they deal with, such as collections of Halakahs that deal with damages, or with marriage laws, and similar ones. The collections were not preserved and their content is scattered throughout the Talmud. As for the Tosefta, it is a collection of Halakoth, the aim of which is to supplement the Mishnah. It was most likely composed right after the Mishnah and follows the same order. Sherira Gaon, in his famous letter\* and Maimonides consider Rabbi Hiyya its compiler, but Cohen says that the post-Mishnaic scholars or the *Amoraim* left no definite statement on its editorship. As for the nature of its composition, he asserts that it contains three elements: statements from older Halakoth which form the basis of the Mishnaic statements on the same subject; passages containing new Halakoth which do not bear directly on the material in the Mishnah (these can be called supplements in a wide meaning of the word); passages which repeat the statements of the Mishnah with explanations.

The analysis of the Mishnah and the Tosefta of the tractate *Shabbat* which occupies the bulk of the book is detailed and helps us understand the general relation between these two great Halakic collections, and illustrates the three-fold purpose stated above, for the compilation of the Tosefta, namely to collect some parts of the older Halakah omitted in the Mishnah, to add some new Halakahs and to explain difficult statements in the Mishnah. The analysis also clarifies the order and arrangement of the chapters in the tractate *Shabbat*, as well as on the sequence of the statements in every chapter of the Mishnah of the tractate. Students of Tannaitic literature will derive much benefit from this work.

#### V. ISRAEL KONOWITZ

A work in the field of Talmudics which testifies to much labor and to great endeavor in arrangement is *Rabbi Akiba* by Israel Konowitz. It represents an attempt to collect all statements of Rabbi Akiba as well as those which refer to him; scattered throughout the entire Talmudic and Midrashic literature. The author's statement in

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\* Cf. on this letter. Volume I, p. 423f.

the preface tells us that he found the name of Akiba mentioned in both the Mishnah and Gemarah of the first four orders of the Babylonian Talmud 753 times. To this number he adds 123 times in the Mishnah of the two orders, *Kadashim* and *Tabarot*, which have no Gemarah, and 284 times in the tractate *Abot D'Rabbi Nathan*, and smaller tractates appended to the Babylonian Talmud. There are also 1,044 more statements in the Palestinian Talmud, *Tosefta*, Tannaitic Midrashim, and other Midrashic works. Added together, the sum of statements collected in the work amounts to 3,186, a figure which gives us a conception of the amount of the labor invested in this work.

As for the arrangement, he divides the entire material into two parts, the first of which he calls *Hagadat Rabbi Akiba*, i.e., Agadic statements, and the second one, *Mishnat Rabbi Akiba*. He subdivides each part into sections, the first into six, and the second into nine. The six sections of the former contain all statements referring to the life of Akiba, his own statements concerning the life and character of man, reward and punishment after death, as well as proverbs and apothegms; statements bearing on mysticism and events in the pre-Sinaitic period of history; statements on Israel, its relation to God, to its land, its history, and its future. The sixth section is a Midrash called *Otiot d'Rabbi Akiba* in which short homilies on the letters of the alphabet are given dealing with many subjects.

The nine sections of the second part contain respectively collections of Akiba's statements on laws and views pertaining to the fundamentals of religion; on laws and views concerning social life; on laws regarding agriculture, including tithes to Levites and the poor, and the heave-offering to priests; on laws dealing with the observances of the Sabbath and holidays; on laws of family life; on laws regarding oaths and vows, and also on dietary laws; on judges and court procedure; on laws relating to Temple worship and sacrifices; and on laws concerning purity and impurity.

The arrangement is far from faultless, for there is really no line of demarcation between Agadic and Halakic statements, for many of the former types are included in the second part which is called *Mishnat Rabbi Akiba*, although it is supposed to deal primarily with Halakah, and there are also many homiletic repetitions. Nor is there any reason for joining the statements on benedictions, dietary laws, and oaths and vows in one section. It was done merely because the author wanted to give the sections a euphonious name, "Hanaha we-Haflah" (Enjoyment and Abstaining).

Yet, notwithstanding these flaws, the work has much value which is enhanced by the introduction. In it we are offered a brief but systematic survey dealing with Akiba, his teachers, and colleagues; his school and leading disciples; his method of interpretation of the Scriptures and of derivation from its verses, bases for new laws, or the proper way to observe biblical precepts; and the rules he employed in such method, the range of his Halakah, and the ethical trend in his Agada. The labor of the author will not be in vain. Much use will be made of the work by students of the Talmud.

#### 54. JEWISH LAW

Simon Federbush made a worthy attempt to present Jewish government law in its many phases in *Mishpat ha-Melukha be-Yisrael* (The Law of Government in Israel). Its purpose is to show that the administration of a Jewish government, completely modern in its form, can be carried on within the frame of biblical and Talmudic laws, if the laws are properly understood.

He begins by devoting several chapters to the Jewish conception of a state and its purpose. Discussing briefly the narrowness of this conception, even by the great Greek philosophers, he points out that the Jews were the first among the nations to assert that the purpose of the state is to train the people to achieve moral perfection, or, as the Bible says, "a kingdom of priests and a holy people" (Exodus, XIX:6). This purpose is also reflected in the concept of the ideal king, the Messiah, who will be a model of righteousness, and in the fact that there were never different strata or classes in the State of Israel. All belonged to one class, and even the king was subjected to the law and could be called to account by court. He then tries to show that the term "Theocracy," which is usually applied to a government run according to religious law, is entirely incorrect in regard to the Jews, for the supposed guardians of religion, the priests, were, with the exception of the short period of the Hasmoneans, never the rulers in Israel, and several of the Hasmonean kings were strongly opposed by the Pharisees.

The government has wide authority in the sphere of enactment of laws affecting all forms of social and political life, all such law-making is really outside of the bounds of strict religious law. He then sums up the main deviation of the Jewish conception of government and its function from that of the conceptions of a theocracy. These consist in granting equality of rights not only to all Jewish

inhabitants of the State, but also to national minorities; and in the separation of the sphere of religion from the sphere of government, for there exists a difference between religious laws enacted by religious authorities and laws enacted by the government. It follows, according to Federbush, that a Jewish government within the frame of Jewish law has no right to use force in matters of belief or religious practice. Consequently, there is no fear that such force will ever be used in the Jewish State at any time.

He then endeavors to show that democracy is the very corner-stone of biblical and Talmudic law. The very Torah was accepted by a covenant between God and Israel (Exodus, IV), which proves that there is no moral right to enact any constitution without the agreement of the people. Such covenants, we learn from the Bible, were made a number of times—by Joshua, by Josiah, and by Ezra and Nehemiah. The Talmud also says: "no decree is enacted unless the majority of the people can accept it."

The author quotes a number of statements to prove that according to Judaism a separation exists between the sphere of religion and the sphere of government. The enforcement of the observance of religious laws and punishment for their transgressions does not belong to the government, for its range is primarily civil and political law in the widest sense of the term, including all laws and rules which regulate and stabilize social and economic life and the administration of government. Furthermore, there is at present no authority even from the point of view of religion which could impose the prescribed biblical punishment for transgressions of religious law, for the old form of ordination or *Semikah* which empowered judges to impose such punishment, cannot be reinstituted.

Establishing these fundamental views, Federbush approaches the main purpose of this work. He proves by quotations from Maimonides and Isaac Abrabanel that the statement in the Torah, "thou shalt set a king over them," by no means obligates election of a king, but mainly the setting up of a government. In fact, Abrabanel claims that a Republic is preferable, and consequently, it follows that the rights and privileges and obedience which a king commands belong also to a republican government with a president at its head.

This is followed by proof for his thesis that throughout Jewish history there existed a double administration of laws, one in the sphere of pure religion, and another in the sphere of government, and the king had a wide range of rights. According to Maimonides,

that included all matters relating to the state, such as enforcing civil and part of criminal law, organizing an army and conduct of war, taxing the people, and even confiscating private property for the benefit of the State, and mobilizing all means of labor and production in time of need—in short, all affairs of government. Moreover, he also had the right, as the Talmud reports, to issue edicts to punish transgressors, even death, if the transgression severely affected the interests of the State. The conclusion is that all these rights, which are practically out of the bounds of pure religion, now passes to the Parliament and the edicts of the government. It does not mean that the government can enact a law which may interfere with the practice of the Jewish religion, for that would mean employing force in matters of religious practice.

This brings him to a consideration of several important matters in the conduct of a government adjusted to modern conditions, the carrying out of which, he claims, are within the frame of Jewish government law. Thus, he points out, the rights granted to non-Jews, both individuals and groups, include not only the enjoyment of full rights as citizens, but also the advantages of charity and beneficent institutions. Both the Bible and the Talmud insist on that, and similarly, all laws regarding the payment of hired laborers apply to them as well. It is true that the non-Jew dwelling in the land must adopt the seven Noahide laws, but these, the author claims, practically form the basis of the universal aspect of religion, and Christians and Mohammedans follow them. Likewise, says he, according to Maimonides, non-Jews can be appointed as officers over their own people. Moreover, he quotes statements and views of other authorities who assert that the reason for the Torah's insistence on the Jewish descent of the king is because that office was an hereditary one, but non-Jews can be appointed to non-hereditary offices and as judges they are empowered to judge their co-religionists.

As for the rights of women to testify and hold office, the Talmud seems to disqualify them, despite the fact that Deborah judged Israel, but later authorities, relying on that fact, say that when the people accept them, and certainly when they choose them, such appointments are permissible. It is certainly permissible when appointments are made by the government which has the same rights as the king, who was allowed, according to the Halakah, changes in such matters.

Similarly, the government has a wide range in punishing criminals. We find in both the Bible and the Talmud, although not in the

Torah, mention of punishment through imprisonment, and we know that in the Diaspora where the Jews had judicial autonomy, severe punishment, even death sentences were meted out for criminal acts, especially when such acts endangered the Jewish group. Today, any criminal act is a danger to public life.

Federbush devotes half of the work to a delineation of many governmental matters within the frame of Jewish law. He discusses laws regarding treason, sources of income for the government—taxes and duty on imported goods—social laws relating to labor and regulation of prices on the sale of goods, and establishment of schools and their administration. He offers a detailed discussion on war and peace; he proves by numerous quotations that in earlier times, during the Second Commonwealth, all these matters were the task of the government, and even later in the Diaspora, social and even economic aspects of life were taken care of by the community council and its leaders. The present Jewish government can therefore adjust all these matters to modern conditions by law enacted within the frame of Jewish law. Space does not allow us to quote copiously, but the matters discussed sufficiently prove the value of the work, the erudition of the author, and the knowledge which can be gained by its use.

## 55. RABBINICS

### i. ISRAEL ELFENBEIN

A valuable work in the field of Rabbinics is *Teshubot Rashi* (The *Responsa* of Rashi), the famous commentator of the Bible and the Talmud, by Israel Elfenbein. It is probably the most complete collection of Rashi's *responsa*, for the editor spent much energy and effort in gathering his material. He used for that purpose, as prefatorially stated, twenty-nine manuscripts which contain various numbers of Rashi's *responsa*, and in addition, he copied a large number of *responsa* scattered in many printed Rabbinic works, such as codes and collections of *responsa* by scholars who followed him. And what is more, although the title of the work is *Responsa by Rashi*, the work contains, in its second part, a large number of brief decisions given by Rashi bearing on numerous points of law, which were culled by the author from a number of codes. The collection contains two hundred and sixty-one *responsa* and eighty-two decisions.

The editor spent a great deal of effort in the arrangement of the material and on the hundreds of notes appended to the work. In the

notes, the errors which had crept into the text of the *responsa*, through recopying, are corrected. The notes also explain obscure passages and supply the Talmudic sources referred to in the text of the *responsa*.

The editor added an introduction in which he discusses a number of subjects, such as the leading traits of Rashi's character, Jewish suffering during the First Crusade, the political and economic conditions of the Jews in France, the authority of Jewish courts, and ordinances enacted by the Rabbis and the councils of Jewish communities. He points to the various *responsa* in which each of these matters are reflected. He emphasizes the wide range of the *responsa* which deal with questions of law, and also contain explanations of many passages in the entire Talmudic literature, including the Tosefta and the Tannaitic Midrashim, as well as explanations of difficult passages in the Bible. Of the latter, there are thirteen *responsa* to queries by scholars of the city of Auxerre, France. The editor endeavors to determine the approximate dates of the *responsa* and the origins of the inquiries, for most of them lack this information, as the *responsa* were transmitted by students who merely headed them by the words "the teacher answered." Of value is his list of rules which Rashi employs in attaining a decision on the way the law should be practiced.

The work, as a whole, consisting of the material collected, the explanatory notes, and the introduction will be of much use to students in the field of Rabbinics.

## ii. KASRIEL L. MISHKIN

A collection of *responsa* by Gershon ben Yehuda, *Light of the Exile*, whose activity in all branches of Talmudics and Rabbinics influenced generations of scholars, was made by Kasriel L. Mishkin. The collection consists of only eighty-one *responsa*, for Rabbi Gershon's authoritative views and decisions were incorporated into numerous codes and commentaries on the Talmud and *responsa* by succeeding scholars, often without credit. They are not only scattered throughout a large number of works, but cannot even be identified. Much energy was therefore spent by the editor in gathering this selection.

He informs us in his preface that the *responsa* were taken from three sources—those quoted in full in various collections of *responsa* by later scholars, such as the large collection of Rabbi Meir of Rothen-



burg, and others; from various codes, some of which are still in manuscript form; references to Rabbi Gershon's *responsa* in commentaries and Halakic works written by scholars of the School Rashi. In these only the decision is given or a mere quotation of the *responsum* is cited. The editor gives in each *responsum* the source from which it was taken, and when the same *responsum* is quoted in several works, he notes the changes in the versions. He also appended some explanatory notes. A number of the collected *responsa* shed light upon Jewish life in Germany and France during the tenth and eleventh centuries, and students of both history and Rabbinics will therefore find this work helpful in their studies.

### iii. SOLOMON B. FREEHOF

Another work in this particular field of Rabbinics, namely *Responsa*, which is not limited to the collection of the works of one great authority, but surveys the entire field, is the *The Responsa Literature*, by Solomon B. Freehof.

He begins by giving a general survey of the *responsa* literature from Gaonic times to the nineteenth century, mentioning a large number of scholars who wrote *responsa* in each century. The geographic range of the survey is wide, and extends from North Africa to Poland, covering all European countries, and including Palestine. This is followed by a chapter on leaders in the field, briefly delineating their lives and activities with a few added remarks on the collections of their *responsa*.

Other chapters offer selections from *responsa* dealing with subjects which either reflect certain phases of Jewish life, or present some interesting points. The first class includes *responsa* on various subjects as the ordination dispute in France in the fourteenth century; the question as to whether Rabbinic scholars may instruct the Karaites in the Oral Law; and the validity of the marriages of Marranos which were performed in Churches; and similar subjects. The second class from which passages are quoted deals with matters in which the echo of modern conditions are heard, i.e., wearing a hat when studying; the validity of a divorce sent through mail; or whether a church building can be turned into a synagogue, etc. There follow chapters on subjects which were widely debated in *responsa*; on the historical material contained in them and on the reflections in the *responsa* of problems in Jewish law created by modern inventions.

The work possesses many good qualities. The material is well

arranged; many volumes are cited, and there is enough material to give the intelligent reader a general conception of that extensive literature. Yet, it seems that the work lacks depth. In the chapter on the leading respondents, emphasis is placed on the delineation of the phases and episodes in their lives. Nothing is said about the method they used in their *responsa* or their trend in decisions, whether it was inclined toward severity or leniency. As an illustration, I will cite a decision in one of the *responsa* of Rabbi Yitzhak Elhanan, whose life is described in that chapter. He accepted a photograph of a man, drawn out from the Thames by the London police, as sufficient identification of the deceased husband of a certain Agunah, permitting her to remarry.\* This is a case which testifies to an inclination toward leniency as well as to the influence of modern life on Jewish law. As a rule, the law requires testimony of two witnesses.

Nor can we say that the historic material in the chapter on history in the *responsa* is well chosen. Such facts as that the Jews who lived on the border of Hungary dealt in non-Kosher wine, or that Jewish physicians visited Christian patients on the Sabbath, do not make first rate history. By only turning the leaves of the *responsa* of Asher ben Yehiel, known as the Rosh, we can find that the Jews in Spain in the first half of the fourteenth century exercised the right to punish malefactors with mutilation or death. We also find there a complete delineation of the organization of Jewish communities, the way they levied taxes, and the portrayal of the orderly fashion in which they conducted their affairs. Similarly, we gain a broad conception of many other phases of the social and economic aspect of Jewish life in Spain, Germany, and Italy from a number of *responsa* collections of the scholars in that country. Such material should not have been overlooked. Notwithstanding these strictures, the book has great value and readers will gain from it a fair knowledge of an important branch of Jewish literature.

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\* Cf. Volume III, p. 730, where the source is given.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, AND RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

#### 56. HISTORY

##### i. OSCAR HANDLIN

Of the many works on American Jewish history which the celebration of the Tercentenary brought forth, several deserve to be noted, either because of the extent of the historical period they embrace, or because of their contents which shed new light upon certain phases of that history. To the first belongs *Adventure in Freedom* by Oscar Handlin. In several hundred pages, he covers the entire three hundred years of American-Jewish history, concentrating on the period from the establishment of the United States in 1776 to 1954. The entire Colonial Period, he disposes of in nineteen pages, recording briefly the friendly attitude of the general population toward the Jewish settlers, the freedom granted them, their spread through the several States, and their attempt at adjustment to new conditions. He also mentions by name a number of these settlers who gained prominence in commerce, or in the professions, or in trade—men like Aaron Lopez, Dr. Lombroso, and Asher Levy.

The bulk of the book is, as said, devoted to the period from 1776 to 1954, which he divides into epochs of about fifty years each. In the second chapter, embracing the first epoch from 1776 to 1820, which he calls "The Life of the Young Republic," he dwells mainly on the patriotic attitude of the Jews and on their participation in that life. He points out the spirit of devotion to the cause of the Republic manifested by Aaron Lopez, who fled Newport when it was conquered by the British soldiers, risking the loss of his property and wealth, as well as similar acts by other merchants in various cities. He also emphasizes the help extended by Hayyim Solomon in the financial transactions of the government in its early years. Similarly, he recounts the careers of Mordecai Emanuel Noah, Judah Touro,

and others, each of whom gained prominence in his particular field.

The following chapter is devoted to the great stream of Jewish migration from West-European countries, primarily from Germany, during the period of 1820-1870, discussing its causes, the opportunities America offered to these newcomers, and the use they made of them. He also chronicles the attempts of a number of these immigrants to enter the broad fields of commerce and industry, and the success many of them attained in these ventures. Nor does he omit the role a number of Jews played in various phases of community life, some as leaders in professions, others as participants in movements, such as abolition of slavery, women's rights, and other reform activities.

As a result of these attempts at adjustment and the various activities by the great mass of immigrants during these fifty years, there ensued a pattern of American-Jewish communal life which Handlin attempts to delineate. He mentions the types of synagogues that were established, attempts at Jewish education by a limited number of congregations in several cities, and briefly emphasizes the change which entered in Jewish life in the attitude toward traditional religious practice. But all that he has to say about the rise of the Reform movement is; "in the three decades after 1855 the new creed emerged." More attention is paid to the social aspect, the organization of orders and lodges, literary societies, and periodicals in English and German, primarily the former.

Several chapters are then devoted to the second great stream of Jewish migration, from Eastern Europe (1870 to 1919), the relationship of this group to the older group they found there, and their adjustment to the new environment. In the first of these chapters, the causes of the flight from the old homes are given. Statistics of the number of immigrants in various years are cited, the spread of their settlement, the concentration in large cities, and the type of life which developed from this concentration. In the second chapter, "Two Communities," the author aims to present the two different types of Jewish life, that of the earlier settlers which already had taken definite shape, and of the new settlers which was in the making, and their relationship to each other. But in order to bring out these relations, many facets of both communities had to be discussed. The author, therefore, discusses the social and religious activities of the older community, the organization of communal and religious life and their attempts at higher Jewish education as expressed in the

organization of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the establishment of the Hebrew Union College by the Reform group, and the Jewish Theological Seminary by the Conservative group. In addition, he also discusses the charitable institutions. He then turns to the younger community and surveys its economic, social, cultural, and religious life, dwelling on the labor movement, the rise and spread of an extensive Yiddish cultural activity, expressed in the publication of many periodicals and books, and in the development of a Yiddish theater. Reference is also made to educational activities.

Handlin proceeds to complete the picture of the development of Jewish life during this period by dwelling on the wider aspect of adjustment to American conditions of the East-European group. He discusses the success of many of its members in the economic field and in the professions, their participation in the political life, their efforts at establishing many educational institutions, and attempts at social organization. He also emphasizes the gradual approach which these two communities made toward each other which resulted in broadening the activities of American Jewry both in their inner life as well as in their aid to their brethren abroad. He completes the work with a rather lengthy discussion of anti-Semitism during the fifty years from 1890 to 1941, and makes a survey of Jewish communal life from 1920 to 1954 in which the effect of Zionism on that life and other movements are briefly delineated. The final chapter gives a bird's eye view of the trials to which American Jewry was subjected, the challenges offered to it, and the responses it gave to them during the long period of more than a century and a half. He comes to the conclusion that all served as sources of stability.

The work is well organized, embrative of many phases of American-Jewish life, and offers much knowledge of its history. All this knowledge, however, refers primarily to 'the external phases of Jewish life, while the inner life is, only casually penetrated.

## ii. HYMAN B. GREENSTEIN

Many books were written dealing with phases of American Jewish history, either limited to an epoch in time or to a history of certain communities. Of the latter, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860* by Hyman B. Greenstein is outstanding. It is devoted primarily to the reflection of inner Jewish life, as it hardly touches upon the economic and political aspects.

In this field we can say that it is almost complete. In the seven

books and twenty-nine chapters in which it is divided, there is not a facet of the inner life which is not described in full detail, whether it concerns the aspects of religious life or the forms of social and cultural life, or the rise of Reform, or the relations of American Jews to Jews abroad and the Holy Land, each one of these subjects is treated in full. It goes without saying that the bulk of the book is devoted to sixty years of the last century, for there was little development of the inner life during the earlier and longer period, and if there were some items of interest, they are integrated into the latter narrative. Since the extent of the work and the large number of details prevent even the shortest summation, we will only state a number of points of interest which are usually not known.

As to the growth of this community, in 1825 there were only 500 Jews in New York, but thirty-four years later, in 1859, their number reached fifty thousand. The reason is well known, for these were the years of the great migration of Jews from Germany and other Western countries, bringing more than 150,000 Jews into this country. Let us examine the difference in the Jewish population in New York in various years to gauge the extensive migration. In the year 1850, there were 16,000 Jews in New York, while in 1855, this figure was almost doubled, reaching 30,000. A great increase is also noted in the number of synagogues built during this short span of time. Up to the year 1825, there was only one synagogue in the city, the Sephardic She'arit Yisrael. In that year, the Ashkenazi members seceded and established their own, the Bnei Yeshurun, but a secession of newly built synagogues soon followed, their number reaching twenty-seven in 1859.

We are also informed by the author of the development of important phases of social life, such as mutual aid and charitable organizations. At first, charity formed part of synagogue activity. Each synagogue founded one or two societies for helping their poorer members, through loans, or in other means of financial support. But soon such help proved inadequate. The work had to be organized on a larger scale and such groups as the Hebrew Benevolent Society and the German Hebrew Benevolent Society were created to provide both mutual aid and social relationships.

In addition, fraternal organizations had sprung up. The Bnai Brith Order was founded in 1843; in 1849, Sons of Israel; and, in 1859, the Order Brith Abraham. Each one of these had many lodges, and the range of Jewish life expanded. Such expansion, in addition

to the increase in population, necessitated the establishment of philanthropic institutions. In 1852, the Jewish hospital, later called Mount Sinai, was founded. It bore on the facade of its building not only the name Jews' Hospital, but the Hebrew name, Beth Holim, and the food served there was strictly Kosher.

We are also informed by Greenstein of an early movement, in 1837, among the members of the congregation Anshe H̱esed, to settle on the land and engage in agriculture. The movement was named *Zeire H̱azon* (The Tender Sheep). However, this plan was not realized. In the following year, a new society was formed for the purpose of founding a colony in Ulster County to be called Shalom. The colony was founded, and, as was recorded in the minutes of Anshe H̱esed, its settlers asked for the loan of a *Sefer Torah* for their synagogue, but the colony was short-lived.

We are further informed that while in the earlier years educational activity was limited to only one Hebrew school, the *Polonis Talmud Torah* maintained by the congregation Shearit Yisrael, it began to increase in the forties and fifties of the last century with the arrival of learned rabbis. Dr. Max Lilienthal, Rabbi of a union of three German-Jewish congregations, established an all-day school called the Union School. Other congregations followed suit, and soon there were about five such schools. There were also several private schools, and, in 1857, Rabbi S. M. Isaacs opened a Hebrew high school. Both Jewish and secular subjects were taught in all. Along with an increase of educational opportunities, there was an increase in cultural activity, and, as a result, several periodicals came into existence. In 1849, *The Asmonean*, edited by Reverend J. J. Lyons, made its appearance, and in 1857, *The Jewish Messenger* was established by a group of Rabbi S. M. Isaacs' students.

The author presents data in regard to the efforts exerted by the leaders of the synagogues to maintain the traditional Jewish form of life, namely to engage a Shohet and to supervise the distribution of Kosher food. A committee was appointed by each congregation whose function it was to maintain the observance of the law. In 1854 and 1855, several congregations joined together in an effort to carry out this purpose. Similarly, care was taken in the preparation of Matzot for Passover. The congregations engaged bakers and sent men to supervise the preparation. When Lilienthal became Rabbi of the three German congregations in 1846, he drew up a list of regulations, and even went to the flour mill to supervise the grinding of the wheat

according to the law. Several congregations even built ritual baths (*mikwot*).

The entry of Reform in New York began when the Emanuel Congregation introduced changes into the service. At first, it adopted the three-year cycle in the reading of the Torah, that is completing the reading of the Torah in three years instead of one, thus reducing the weekly reading to one third. This was followed with abolishing the calling on individuals to read the Torah by having the Hazan read it. They then instituted family pews and the singing of German hymns before and after the sermon, but Hebrew remained the language of the prayers.

Other data provided by this work deserve attention. We learn of the interest of New York Jews in the fate of their brethren abroad. They responded to an appeal for help from the Tunisian Jews, a number of whom were banished from their country. The Damascus affair of 1840, aroused New York Jews to organize a large protest meeting at which a committee was appointed to address a letter to the President of the United States, asking him to instruct the consul in Alexandria to cooperate with the consuls of other nations in bringing about the release of the prisoners. A reply was received from the Secretary of State that such an order had already been sent. Likewise did the Jews of New York respond generously to requests for help from cities in the Holy Land, and received the messengers from there favorably. Thus did New York Jews in the earlier years lay the foundation for its future great role in affairs of world Jewry.

The value of Greenstein's work is enhanced by a number of appendices and a large number of notes. One of the appendices contains a reproduction of a Hebrew letter sent out by the Bnei Yeshurun Congregation, in 1826, asking the help of other congregations in the United States for the erection of their synagogue. The bibliographical notes attest to the great amount of labor invested by the author in this work.

### iii. MORRIS A. SCHAPPES

In addition to a number of works on American Jewish history, two source books were produced in the past quarter-century which are important contributions to historical literature. The first is *A Documentary History of the Jews of the United States* by Morris A. Schappes, which covers the long period from 1654 to 1875.

The work contains one hundred and fifty-nine documents which



touch upon every phase of Jewish political, religious, economic, and social life, as well as upon the interest of American Jews in the fate of their brethren abroad. Most of the documents are short, but a number are of considerable length, for they include speeches and articles by leading Jews and non-Jews, and also reports of travel in the West. All these indicate the wide range of the documents.

A number of these documents merit our attention. An advertisement was inserted by Abraham Cohen of Philadelphia in the daily newspaper which ran for five days in the month of March, 1790, making it known that he taught Hebrew. It seems that the advertisement was intended for Christian clergymen who wished to obtain a knowledge of the sacred language. The fact that the advertisement was repeated for five days shows that Cohen must have had grounds for his hopes that he would receive replies from certain people. The Jewish attitude toward slavery is displayed in a number of documents, most of which show opposition to it, and several documents record manumission of slaves by Jewish owners. Nevertheless, one contains orders to the captain of a slave ship they owned by two Jews, Isaac Eliezer and Samuel Moses, as to how the cargo was to be disposed.

As regards the interest of American Jews in the fate of their brethren abroad, we have in this work a full report of the activities in regard to the Damascus affair of 1840. It contains the plea of Jewish committees to the government for intervention in this matter, and also the letters sent by the State Department containing reports on its activities. A number of pages are devoted to the reports by the American Ambassador in England on the reaction evoked by that affair in that country, and he also encloses the resolutions passed at a protest meeting held in the mansion house.

A similar document reports on petitions sent by American Jews on behalf of the Jews of Switzerland, from 1851 to 1857, to the President to reject the treaty which was negotiated between the United States and the Swiss government, which discriminated against the Jews. The treaty was not rejected but the United States made its displeasure with the conditions clear, and, as a result, certain modifications were made by the Swiss. Eventually, the Jews received full rights.

This work also discloses several interesting facts about inner Jewish life. As late as 1850, there were only two hundred Jews in Chicago, and in an autobiographical account, Joseph Jonas offers a detailed history of the settlement of the Jews in Cincinnati. He was the first Jew to arrive there, in 1816, and he had to wait four years,

until 1820, to have a *Minyan* for public service. From that time on, things took a turn for the better; more Jews came, and in 1834, the first synagogue was built, and in 1842, a second one. In that year, a Sunday school was also organized, provoking opposition from the pious Jews who, as Jonas says, were antagonized by the fact that the school was held only on Sunday, thus implying reverence for that day. Jonas' account reveals the strong traditional spirit of a large part of the settlers in Cincinnati.

The strength of that spirit during the larger part of the last century is evident in another attempt to maintain traditional Jewish life. That attempt was made in the same city seventeen years later when it had already become the center of incipient Reform Judaism. In 1859, a meeting of rabbis and laymen was held for the purpose of strengthening the observance of the Sabbath, and a series of resolutions was passed. Among them was one that all participants at the meeting pledge their word of honor to keep their places of business closed on that day, and another one urging the appointment of a committee of five whose duty would be to call on Jewish businessmen of the city and solicit their promise to close stores and factories on the Sabbath. Heading the committee of five were Rabbi Max Lilienthal and Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, the leaders of the Reform movement. They wanted a change in Judaism, aiming to modernize it, but, at the time, they could not divest themselves of the Jewish traditions in which they had been trained. These are only a few illustrations of the rich material which this work contains.

#### iv. JACOB RADER MARCUS

The second work is *The Memoirs of American Jews* (1775-1865), edited by Jacob Rader Marcus. The work is divided into three volumes, chronologically arranged. Its range of reflection of Jewish life is not as wide as that of Schappes, for the *Memoirs* tell primarily of the life experiences of individuals. But, taking into consideration that among these writers of memoirs are included a number of men who gained prominence both in general and in Jewish life—Oscar and Isidor Straus, Simon-Wolf, Isaac Lesser, and Isaac M. Wise—whose activities left an indelible impression on American Jewish life, it follows that the scope of life reflected in the *Memoirs* is wide and of great interest. In addition, a number of these *Memoirs* shed light on important events as well as on the character of great personalities in American history, for the writers participated in the events or were in close contact with the personalities.

Furthermore, these *Memoirs* have depth, for they are not isolated facts or data, but a series of connected experiences and responses to challenges, which express the character of the writer and reflect the nature of the environment in which he lived and acted. We thus obtain a series of portrayals of aspects of life, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Even portrayals by men who did not attain greatness, but after much struggle succeeded in attaining wealth, are valuable and, what is more, there is greater interest in the parts dealing with their struggles than those of their successes.

Thus, the short memoir of Abraham Cohen, who in later life became a successful politician in Chicago and was a friend of Lincoln, is limited to the days of struggle when he was peddling in the villages of New England. But the chronicle of his experiences, which tells of his walking from village to village with a ninety-pound pack on his shoulders, arouses our interest, for we see in it many phases of life, his weary wandering, the attitude of the farmers to Jewish peddlars, which was not always friendly, and his spiritual revolt against his own conduct. Time and again, he records in his diary his remorse at having to desecrate the Sabbath and having to neglect to put on his phylacteries or omit his prayers. His conscience was soon at peace, but the repeated complaints during the earlier days incite our sympathy.

Very moving is the story of Simon Wolf, who saved the life of a Jewish soldier sentenced to death for desertion during the Civil War. The reason for his desertion was that he visited his mother, who was on her deathbed. Wolf managed to get an interview with Lincoln scheduled at 2 A.M. After hearing the story, Lincoln said: "impossible to do anything, I have no influence with the War Administration." Wolf then said to him, "what would you have done under such circumstances? If your dying mother had summoned you to her bedside, would you have been a deserter to her who gave you birth, rather than a deserter in law, but not in fact, to the flag to which you had sworn allegiance?" Lincoln then rang for his secretary and ordered him to send a telegram stopping the execution. Later he said, "I thank God for having done what I did."

Isaac Lesser's lengthy memoir, which really contains excerpts from his articles in the *Occident*\* recording visits to many Jewish com-

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\* A monthly periodical published by him.

munities, presents a kaleidoscopic picture of the inner Jewish life in the middle of the nineteenth century. He tells of his visits to day schools in New York and in Baltimore, giving the number of their pupils, of visits to other cities where Jews, though economically solid, yet have no Jewish school, of the spiritual situation of many Jewish communities through the country, and he also evaluates the character and activity of the rabbis of the congregations. He is, on the whole, satisfied with his visits, and is optimistic about the future, yet he complains several times that the affairs given for the benefit of Jewish charity have no Jewish note in them, a complaint which may not be amiss even today in regard to many Jewish affairs.

Isaac M. Wise's memoirs contain many portrayals of facets of Jewish life, but one short description of a phase of Jewish economic activity in those days is especially brilliant and may offer an explanation of why American Jewry did not follow the way it trod in its earlier days. It is a description by an intelligent Jewish peddler in Syracuse of a trade followed by many of the immigrants in those days. "Our people in this country," he said, "may be divided into the following classes: the basket peddler, who is altogether dumb; the trunk carrier who stammers a little English and hopes for better times; and the pack carrier who carries from 100 to 150 pounds upon his back, and indulges in the thought that he will become a businessman some day. In addition, there is the aristocracy, who are again divided into three classes; the wagon baron who peddles through the country with one or two horse team; the jewelry count, who carries his stock of watches and jewelry in a small trunk, and is considered rich; the store prince, who has a shop and sells goods in it." When Wise asked about the people of intelligence, his interlocutor answered: "those who live in this country must forego all intellectual pursuits." "But why?" asked Wise. "In order to become rich." There was much truth in that answer. They did become rich, but lost much of the vigor they displayed in earlier years for maintaining Jewishness in a difficult environment. These fragments prove the value of the three volumes of *Memoirs*, which in their totality present a large section of Jewish life in the period of formation. The editor, in collecting the material and in its arrangement, made a real contribution to the study of American Jewish history.

#### V. MAURICE SAMUEL

Maurice Samuel, novelist, interpreter of Yiddish literature, and

essayist, undertook in *The Professor and the Fossil*, to offer a scathing criticism of Toynbee's ten-volume work, *A Study of History*. It is not, however, a criticism of the History as a whole, but is limited to Toynbee's distorted view of the role of the Jewish people in history.

On the whole, he is successful in proving his point that Toynbee's view of the Jews is not objective, but subjective, dominated by a conscious or unconscious animosity toward them. Samuel points out the various glaring contradictions in that view in Toynbee's own statements. While he says: "the children of Israel had been gifted with an unparalleled spiritual insight with which all other nations were not endowed," certainly not the members of the Syrian group, he then goes on to make them a remnant of that group. Furthermore, while Toynbee himself is amazed at the vitality of the Jews who live on today and wonders "at the imperviousness of Israel to the alchemy of history which dissolves nations in its crucible, while we Gentiles all in turn succumb," he still insists on calling them a fossil. He marvels at the ethos with which Rabbi Johannan ben Zakkai endowed his people when their Temple and land were destroyed, saying, "the secret of this latter Jewry's extraordinary power lies in its persistent cultivation of the ethos which Johannan ben Zakkai bequeathed to it." Yet he speaks of the Jewish Diaspora as "the pulverized social ash which is drifting about the world as the ash dust which floats around after the eruption of a volcano." Toynbee acknowledges the service of the Jews to the Western world in improving the economic opportunities when the nations were still in a semi-barbaric state, by building up the slender commerce into a lucrative business and by introducing a valuable trade. He also admits the injustice of the Gentiles in displacing the Jews by force when they learned the skill of trade from them, and yet he says, "the Jews reaped where they had not sown."

Samuel points out Toynbee's tendency to make light of Jewish endeavors by labeling the defense by the Maccabees of their religion and land as an act of violence, while he glosses over the brutalities of the Gentile nations toward the Jews. He bewails their failure to respond to the teachings of Jesus, whom he calls "the Jewish scion of forcibly converted Galilean Gentiles by the Jewish King, Jannai," denying even the descent of Jesus from a pure Jewish family. Similarly, our author points out the falseness of Toynbee's accusation that race prejudice derives its inspiration from the Old Testament, point-

ing to the brutal way the conquest of Canaan was carried out by the Jews, and to the view that they are an elected people. Samuel devotes a chapter to a denial of this accusation by quoting a number of statements in the Bible on the equality of rights granted by the Jews to the stranger (Ger) and statements by the prophets which speak of the equality of all nations, as in the words of Amos: "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel, saith the Lord" (Amos, IX:7). And he grants the same equality to the Philistines and Aram, though both were enemies of Israel.

In several chapters, the author presents the view of Jewish monotheism which indirectly attacks Toynbee's attempt to lessen its value, and delineates briefly Jewish life from 70 C.E. to the end of the Medieval period. He shows the strength of the vitality of that life, the great literature it produced, and its share in philosophic thought and science during the Middle Ages.

After presenting a short history of Zionism, Samuel turns to the attack of Toynbee on that movement, in which his animosity toward the Jews is expressed in full. He points out that Toynbee's account of the war between the Jews and Arabs in 1948 and its resulting events, ignores even the report of the Committee on International Affairs, headed by himself. The report is written by the secretary of that committee, Mr. Kirk, and while it is far from friendly to the Jews, nevertheless presents the course of events in a different light from Toynbee, who leaves out all points which may be called somewhat favorable to the Jews, and selects only those which agree with his distorted view. His animosity toward the Jews reaches its peak in the following statements. After referring briefly to the great atrocities of the Germans during the years 1939-1945, he says: "but the Nazi Gentiles' fall was less tragic than that of the Zionist Jews who became persecutors in their turn." Another statement reads: "on the Day of Judgment the gravest crime of the Germans will not be that they exterminated a majority of the Western Jews, but that they had caused the surviving remnant of Jewry to stumble." These statements need no comment, for they stand as the gravest accusation against Toynbee himself as being guilty of deep hatred of the Jews, which he could not control even against his better judgment.

The work of Samuel in marshaling all the contradictions, accusations, and quotations, and his attempts, brief as they are, to show the Jewish vitality during the Diaspora as well as its contributions, is a

worthy one and deserves credit. It possesses, however, some faults in arrangement as well as in omission of several important facts and arguments.

The contradictions, accusations, and falsehoods marshaled by the author are not grouped together, but scattered through a large part of the book. They should have all come in one part, and all refutations and attempts to show the vitality and contributions of Jewry should have appeared separately. Such arrangement would have been more impressive than the scattered form. The report of Jewish contributions is at times too short, and at other times too long. The formation of the Yiddish language, the nuances it introduces into words and expressions, and its literature, important as they may be, are not the greatest contributions of the Jewish spirit, yet a chapter of fourteen pages is devoted to this subject, while the entire Jewish history from 70 C.E. to the eighteenth century and its contribution is dealt with in less. A few pages should have been devoted to the delineation of the Jewish literature, written mostly in Hebrew, which consists of more than one hundred thousand books, printed and in manuscript form, preserved in the great European libraries. Nor should such names of philosophers as Herman Cohen, Henri Bergson, and Cassirer, in whom the Jewish spirit is manifested, and such great scientists as Einstein, be missing. These names would certainly reflect what a "fossil" is capable of.

In answer to Toynbee's complaint of the violence of the Maccabees and the failure of the Jews to respond to the call of Greek culture, it should have been pointed out that if they had followed his advice, there would have been no Christianity. Nor would the ancestors of the "scion" which produced him, according to Toynbee, have been converted to Judaism, and paganism would have been dominant. In fact, Gentiles in Galilee were never converted by any of the Maccabean princes. These were the Ittureans in the Syrian desert. The place where Jesus and his disciples were born and raised was settled by Jews for ages. Notwithstanding these strictures, Samuel's work has much value, for it ably points out the grave defects in Toynbee's work, and proves convincingly the distortion of his view of the Jewish role in history.

#### vi. SIMON RAWIDOWICZ

Simon Rawidowicz earned an important place in the Jewish literature of the last twenty-five years in Hebrew in particular, through

his many contributions in the fields of Jewish philosophy, ethics, etc. His distinguished works are the edition of Nahman Krochmal's *More Nebuké be-Zeman* (The Guide of the Perplexed of our Time), containing an embracing introduction of 200 pages; his edition, with introduction and notes, of the first book of the Code of Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Mada* (Book of Knowledge); and his production of Moses Mendelsohn's *Schriften zum Judenthum* (Works Dealing with Aspects of Judaism), with an introduction and notes covering 183 pages. To these should be added a large number of essays in Hebrew on various aspects of past and present Jewish life and literature. In the later years of his life, he began to collect a part of these essays into a volume, but was prevented from seeing it published by death, and *Babel we-Yerushelayyim* (Babylon and Jerusalem) appeared posthumously. Limited space forces us to devote attention primarily to this last work.

The book, as stated, consists largely of essays written at various times, yet it is presented as a distinct volume dealing with one subject, although from different aspects. It revolves around a central theme—the discussion of the destiny and character of the immediate future of Jewish life in the light of its double aspect, that of the State of Israel and that of the Diaspora. Hence its title, *Babel we-Yerushelayyim*. The words of the title are employed symbolically. The first symbolizes the Diaspora, for the Babylonian exile laid its foundation and formed its spiritual character. Jerusalem, of course, stands for the State of Israel, for, through the millennia of dispersion, the Jews in their prayers pleaded for the restoration of Jerusalem which symbolizes to them all that is best and desirable in the reestablishment of their State.

The book is divided into an introduction and three parts. The introduction is rather lengthy, and primarily points out the method which he employs in discussing the theme of the work, namely the way in which the present double aspect of Jewish life, the State and the Diaspora, will affect the future. Such an important problem, says he, cannot be viewed from the point of view of the present alone, but must be dealt with in a complete manner, namely through a survey of the character of Jewish history. Only through such a method can light be shed on the problem of the present, offering an insight into the future. He therefore devotes the first part of his work to a short presentation of the philosophy of Jewish history. Parodying the Bible, which refers to the Jewish people as the House of Israel,



he names this part *Shaar ha-Bait* (The Portals of the House), meaning thereby the entry by survey into the character of the history of Israel.

He then offers, in the first part, a division of Jewish history into two great periods naming them, according to the above-mentioned terminology, *Bayyit Rishon* and *Bayyit Shéni* (First and Second Houses), meaning the biblical period up to the Babylonian exile, and the long period extending for two and a half millennia from the Babylonian exile to the present. These two terms are also used quite frequently by all Jewish historians, but they possess a different connotation. The term "house" refers to the Temple, and the "first house" embraces the period of its existence from its erection by Solomon to its destruction, spanning about 410 years. And the "second house" denotes the period of the Second Temple, a span of time close to 586 years. This is followed by the period of dispersion. Rawidowicz, however, makes no distinction between the time of the Second Temple and that of the dispersion, for he claims that spiritually there was no essential distinction and in this consists his innovation.

The first period, which can be called the House of the Scriptures or the biblical period, was distinguished, says Rawidowicz, by the width of its horizon, by its vision and dreams. There is in it emphasis on belief and a struggle against myth, but no stress on action. The second period, beginning with the Babylonian exile, presents a completely different picture. There is no separation in the body of the people; there is one people, with individual differences in attitude and striving. The second period absorbed much of the first, but there was a recreation of what was absorbed. There is evident in it a narrowing of spirit, a great emphasis on action on the practice of the commandments of religion, and a willing assumption of its yoke, all of which had practically created the uniqueness of the people of Israel.

This uniqueness, according to our author, began with the Babylonian exile. It was in Babylon that the Diaspora had its beginning. It was there that the conception arose that a state and a particular land are not absolutely necessary conditions for the existence of the people of Israel. It can exist as a world people, for it is a unique people. This uniqueness stems from the new conception of the law and Torah. The written law was given to the people to be practiced, but this practice cannot be carried out without interpretation of its content, hence the oral law. Therefore, there arose the great change

in the spirit of Israel, the emphasis on action and practice, and consequently, on the oral law.

The new concept brought about a change in values, and the primary value became learning or study of Torah. It has attained such a degree that numerous statements in the Talmud and Midrash even speak of God Himself as learning Torah and offering decisions in controversies about questions of the practice of the law. The statements must, of course, be taken metaphorically, but they show the exceptionally high value the sages and scholars placed upon learning.

He summarizes the leading results of this new view to consist in several points: the emphasis placed on the practice of the oral law during the *Bayyit Shéni* period; its equalization with the written law given at Sinai; the high value of learning that figuratively it is even attributed to God Himself.

The characteristics of the two periods, the first and second, says the author, are both expressions or aspects of the Jewish spirit and delineate its fundamental character. Yet, from time to time, a struggle breaks forth between the two trends. Up to the eighteenth century, the spirit of the "second house" was dominant in Jewish life and history. But from that time on the struggle between the two aspects begins.

Rawidowicz catalogs such outbursts during the last two hundred years, such as the Haskalah or the enlightenment movement, which expressed the trend of the first period not only in basing itself primarily on the Bible in its reverence of Judaism, but also in its tendency to influence the outside world and be influenced by it, for the Bible is not only the home of the spirit of the Jews but of the Gentiles as well. Again, the Reform movement which continually speaks of biblical Judaism, primarily stresses the ethical precepts at the expense of the particularly religious. Mere ethics and adoration of prophetic Judaism cannot, according to our author, contribute to the uniqueness of the House of Israel, for they are shared by followers of other religions.

This attempted turn to the spirit of the first period is especially manifested in the Zionist movement and primarily in the phase of its realization, the Jewish State. It is here that the problem of the future is presented in its sharpest aspect. Even in the Zionism preceding the foundation of the State of Israel there was evident, asserts Rawidowicz, a note of strong antagonism to the Diaspora Jewry, but it reached its height in the first decade of the existence of the State. Thence

calls for the gathering of the exiles issue forth by its leaders and within it there arises an antagonism to the type of Judaism of the Diaspora together with its ideals and strivings, which are the very essence of the spirit of the millennial second period. True, not all Zionists agree to such a tendency, for the Mizrachi and the other Orthodox groups still cling to that spirit. Our author points to the attitude of the rising generation in the State of Israel, who have wandered so far away from the spirit and uniqueness of the second period that they would like to eliminate it entirely. A certain small section of that generation prefer to call themselves Cannanites rather than Jews, or even Israelites.

From this attempt to present a filosofico-historical survey of the spirit of the two periods, there emerges a problem which demands a definite solution, for it concerns the very future of the Jewish people. The problem is, according to the writer, whether the third period in the history of the House of Israel, in his parlance, to which the year 1948 or 5708 A.M. served as the opening portal, will be a continuation of the previous Jewish spirit in some form, or a new creation. To the full analysis of the problem and to the offer of a rather ethereal solution the other two parts are devoted, containing no more than 742 pages.

The length of his discussion of the problem and the solution prevents a detailed presentation. We will therefore present his view and only some of his arguments. Rawidowicz is not an anti-Zionist and is certainly not against the State. He only opposes the ideology of the leadership of the State and their attitude to the Jewry of the dispersion. The ideology posits the State as the center of Jewish life which will serve as the fountain of influence of Jewishness for world Jewry, and claims that the very existence of that Jewry depends upon it. For a time the leaders of the State believed that with its establishment the Diaspora would gradually disappear and continued to call for the gathering of the exiles. When the call was not heard and the large majority of Jewry still resided in the Diaspora, the call was lowered, but the attitude of its leaders was not changed. They still claim the superiority of the State and look upon the Diaspora as an appendage. They resent every interference on the part of the Jews outside the State as an encroachment upon the power of the State. Rawidowicz opposes this, claiming that it creates a separation between Israel and Israel, namely between different parts of the Jewish

nation, something which has never happened before in the history of Judaism.

He therefore demands a change in the attitude and in the relation between the two parts of Jewry. He demands first that the idea of a gathering of the exiles should be given up altogether, for since it is becoming evident that it will never be fully carried out and the majority of the Jews will remain in the Diaspora, any demand for their migration to the State in stronger or weaker form will only weaken the power of resistance of the Diaspora Jews to the influence of their environment.

He further questions the claims of the State of having authority over the Jewish people and of being a center of influence on Jewish life in the Diaspora. Influence, says he, can be exerted only when the recipient is willing. But thus far the Diaspora did not show such will. He points to the slight influence of Zionism in improving the spiritual state of the various Jewries and also to the little effect of the greatest contribution of the State in the spiritual and cultural sphere, namely the revival of Hebrew, had upon the various settlements of the Diaspora.

The worst effect of this feeling of superiority on the part of the State and its leaders is that it brought a vigorous antagonism into the hearts of the younger generation in Israel to the entire spiritual, religious, and cultural tradition created and nurtured during the last two millennia in the Diaspora. Such a feeling will create a rift in Jewry which will never be united.

This then is the negative and critical aspect of his view. The positive one is as follows. Jewry as a whole must be considered as one entity, but consisting of two organs, those Jews who live in the State, and the others who live in the Diaspora. Both should continue their existence through their own powers. There should be no condition attached to the existence of the Diaspora, as Zionism and the State leadership assert, making it dependent on the State.

There must be a revival of Jewishness in the Diaspora and also in the State. This revival must come not through Zionism nor even through the numerous organizations now existing. These must be disbanded, and instead there ought to be a movement which would embrace the nation as a whole. This movement should exist both in the Diaspora and in the Jewish State, not only to facilitate the struggle for existence, but also to insure continuous improvement. Both

must carry the burden of the future of the people and the maintenance of progress in Jewish life.

On the whole, there is a great difference between the critical part of the work or the presentation of the problem, and the one which offers a solution. The first is buttressed with arguments and numerous quotations and extractions from writings and speeches which strengthen his demand for changes. The second merely expresses a pious wish and a desire, for we are not given any plan nor an indication for one, how such an embrasive movement can arise when all previous movements accomplished so little according to our author. The result is that after going through close to one thousand pages we are left with no solution to the problem.

Yet, the volume has value, for Jewish life at present, including that of the State, needs a sound critical survey. While the criticism will not bring immediate action it may arouse people to think that all is not well in the House of Israel and that great effort and much deliberation is needed not only for stabilizing the existence of the State, but also for bringing about a brighter future.

The volume also displays much thought and in a number of chapters the discussions bristle with fine philosophic remarks and passages which display deep historical insight—all of which enhance its value greatly.

### 57. HISTORY OF LITERATURE

An important contribution to the history of literature, dealing with Hebrew poetry of the Golden Age in Spain, is *Shirat Kodesh* (Sacred Poetry) by Moses Ibn Ezra, edited by S. Berenstein. It is the complete edition of the sacred poems of this gifted singer, whose poems together with those of Gabirol and ha-Levi, form the apex of poetic expression of the Hebrew muse of that period. The contribution of Berenstein is a three-fold one, expressed in the collection of the poems into one book, in the notes appended to them, and in the introduction.

Moses Ibn Ezra (ca. 1055-1138) who, in his youth, sang of love, of joy, and of the beauty of nature, turned in his middle age to sing, with vigor of his poetic spirit, of the glory of God and of His people, its greatness, its suffering, and its hope for redemption. Numerous were the poems, deep the feeling in them, and great their impression. Before long his poems were incorporated into the Sabbath and holiday prayer-books of many Jewries, and he was crowned by them with

the name *ba-Salah*, the penitential singer. The very popularity of Ben Ezra's sacred poems made their gathering into one volume a difficult task. While his secular poems were collected by Hayyim Brody twenty years ago, the sacred poems remained scattered in many manuscripts and in early editions of the prayer-book of the Spanish, North African, Oriental, and Southern French communities. Much effort and energy was spent by Berenstein in search of the originals and in copying and publishing them, but still greater was the task of preparing the poems for publication. The very spread of the poems into different countries, passing through the hands of numerous copyists through the centuries, caused a large number of errors and interpretations, and the correction of the errors in the text of the two hundred and thirty-seven poems in the collection, required much patience as well as good taste.

This collection is divided into a number of sections according to the themes and the time of recitation. These include poems of redemption, *Selihot* (Penitential poems), poems for New Year services, and poems for the services on the Day of Atonement. It is interesting to note that one of Ben Ezra's poems for the *Neilah* service is recited in the Sephardic synagogues even in this country with special pomp and ceremony, which bears witness to the deep feeling of piety contained in its lines.

The second contribution is one hundred pages of notes which not only explain the changes in the readings and the corrections in the texts of the poems introduced by the editor, but also give the time when the poems were used by communities in different countries, in their services. We can gauge the high esteem in which Ibn Ezra's poems were held by the people as many of them are marked in the manuscript and in the printed prayer-books with the word, *Lahan* (melody), i.e. they are to be sung with a special melody in order to bring out the poetic beauty and feeling of piety they contain. Of special interest are the explanations of hundreds of words and passages, and the special nuances the poets introduced into them, in addition to the veiled references to historic events, or references to statements in the Agada.

The third contribution is the introduction which, although brief, reveals the leading traits in the poet's personality, as well as important episodes in his life. Berenstein quotes long extracts from Ibn Ezra's poems, and skillfully draws out data on the poet's life. He also discusses Ibn Ezra's other work, written in Arabic and translated into

Hebrew by the late Ben Zion Halper, under the title *Shirat Yisrael* (The Poetry of Israel), in which he attempts to present a history of Hebrew poetry in Spain from its inception. In this work there are many passages which reflect the poet's view of life, as well as his reaction to many aspects of Judaism. During the past fifty years only ninety sacred poems by Ibn Ezra have been published in small collections by various scholars, while this collection contains, as mentioned, two hundred and thirty-seven poems, a fact which helps us to estimate the importance of the task the editor undertook and successfully accomplished.

### 58. BIOGRAPHY

A biography of the famous fourteenth century scholar, known as the *Ribash*, i.e., Rabbi Isaac Bar Sheshet Perfet (1326-1408), was written by Abraham Hirshman and entitled *ha-Ribash u-Tkufato* (Isaac Bar Sheshet and His Time). As the title indicates, it deals not only with his life and activities, but also with Jewish life in his times. It is therefore divided into two parts, the first devoted to his personal life, the second to his times.

However, the first forty-five years of his life are dealt with very briefly, probably due to the paucity of source material. We learn that he was born in Barcelona and received instruction from three great scholars, Hasdai Crescas the elder, Peretz ha-Cohen, and Nissin Gerondi, known as the *Ran*, i.e., Rabbi Nissin. Three daughters and one son were born to him. He was highly respected in his community, although the position he held in it is not definitely known. From his *responsa* our author deduces that he was drafted for communal work, for he complains frequently of its burden. We also know that he headed an academy there. In the year 1370 or 1371, due to an accusation made by informers to the government against the notables of the community, Perfet, Rabbi Nissin, his friend Hasdai Crescas the younger, the famous philosopher, and others were arrested and imprisoned for several months, and later declared not guilty and freed. He stayed in Barcelona for another year and then left for Saragossa, where he was invited to become the rabbi of the community.

From that time on, Hirshman says, his activities increased and his fame began to spread. Perfet undertook to uproot certain customs prevalent in Saragossa which were not entirely in accordance with his religious views, but since the customs had been practiced for a long time, his action aroused opposition. However, when he wanted

to accept the rabbinate offered him by the city, Calatayud, the community raised great objections, and sent a committee to Calatayud, asking for a release of the rabbi from his promise. Still, before long, opposition again arose on the part of some members of the community of Saragossa, and he finally left, in 1385, for Valencia, where in addition to his work as rabbi, he was much occupied with writing *responsa* to hundreds of queries which were sent to him from all parts of Jewry. However, his peaceful days did not last long, for soon the great storm of the year 1391 broke out upon Spanish Jewry during which almost all Jewish communities were attacked, tens of thousands of Jews killed, and many more forced to embrace Christianity. Of the five thousand Jews in Valencia, two hundred and fifty were killed and the rest were converted. Perfet succeeded in escaping to North Africa and became the rabbi of Algiers.

His activity in Algiers was many-phased—he organized the community and enabled it to carry on all social and religious matters in the best manner. His position was strengthened when, through the efforts of a man who had influence at court, the Sultan appointed him as the authoritative judge and leader of the community and empowered him to punish anyone disobeying him. This aroused opposition on the part of the other rabbis in the city, but it never came to a head. He continued in his position until his death in 1408.

Hirshman devotes several short chapters to Perfet's personality and to his attitude toward secular studies. He notes two leading qualities in his character, which were love of peace and love of truth. He endeavored to preserve the peace between opposing parties in all the communities within the scope of his influence; on the other hand, his love of truth brought him much trouble, for he fought for it in spite of opposition and did not yield even if he had to suffer.

Much light is shed upon Jewish life in the province of Aragon from the survey of the author in the second section. We learn from it that the Jews there had full authority in the conduct of their inner affairs. The autonomy embraced the right to pronounce judgment on their own members in civil and also in criminal cases. Their court had the right to impose punishment, as fines, corporal punishment either by flagellation, or even by cutting off an organ of the body, a finger or even a hand, and imprisonment. Finally, in certain cases, they could even sentence the criminal to death. This sentence was seldom imposed except in the case of informers, for this crime was considered dangerous to the community as a whole.



The communities were well organized. They were ruled by a council consisting of twelve, eighteen, or thirty members. The council assessed and collected taxes for the government and directed all institutions. The council had an executive committee of trustees who worked with the judges. There were two courts, one for civil and criminal cases, and one for moral and religious transgressions. The rabbi had a special right to impose a light form of excommunication, called in Jewish law *Nidui*. In addition, there was also a political committee to represent the community before the government. These are some illustrations of the form of communal and social life of the Jews in the Province of Aragon in the fourteenth century, before the great storm of persecutions and massacres broke out in 1391.

The value of the book is enhanced by the list of rabbis and scholars who had sent queries to Perfet, and the nature of the cases they brought before him. The book displays research and erudition, and students of Jewish history will gain much by its use.

## 59. RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

### i. ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL

The work on philosophy of religion, *Man Is Not Alone* by Abraham Joshua Heschel, is one in which the form competes with the content for worth and value, but there is much thought in it. The starting point of the author in expounding his philosophy of religion is the sense of awe which man feels on contemplating the grandeur of nature, as when gazing at the world on a bright, starry night. This feeling of awe calls forth amazement and wonder, which in turn, brings to the soul a sense of the ineffable; it senses that there is something beyond the world which it cannot grasp nor express, but the certainty of the existence of that something is definite.

The author claims that wonder is a better source of knowledge than reason, for reason brings doubts, while wonder results in increase of knowledge. The encounter of the mystery of the ineffable on looking at the world in certain moments alludes to something beyond the world with a certainty. Science, in its attempt to explain the behavior of nature, may explain the how, but not the why. Even our own presence in the world is a mystery. One feels as a self, but one also feels that this self was not self-made, and therefore one is an object, but an object must have a subject, and thus the intuition of the certain existence of God is born.

Reason, says Heschel, also attempts to prove the existence of a

power beyond the world, and points to the rational design evident in it. The God of the philosophers, however, is impersonal, and man may care little for Him. The religious intuition not only possesses certainty of God's existence, but conceives all things and men as the realization of God's thought; we do not ask where He is, but rather exclaim; where is He not? Faith then comes without speculation and proof. When an artist paints a picture of a house in all its details and particulars, everybody will agree that there must be a house in existence. Similarly, when we see the world, which is the grand picture of an exceptionally wonderful conception, we are certain that there must be a conceiver.

Heschel then turns to define the meaning of religion through the concept "divine." He says that the leading attribute of God is unity. We say one God, and that signifies that there is unity in all the diversity which comes through His power, for all such diversity is in His eye. Consequently, no one is ever alone in the world, for He is everywhere in nature as well as in history. Such view of the oneness of God also supplies the basis of morality, for the good, as seen by God, is identical with life and is organic to the world, while evil is identical with death. Evil is divergence, confusion, and alienates man from God, while good brings togetherness and union. The religious view of God also teaches us how man can come near to God. We speak of a living God and thus attribute life to Him, but we know that a fundamental element of life is concern with others, be they things or men. Consequently, the more man has concern for others, the nearer he comes to God.

Another path to God is faith. It has its source in the rich treasure of the memories of the group. These memories play a great role in Judaism, for most of the prayers speak of the kindness bestowed upon them by God during history. Much of what the Bible demands can be condensed into one word—"remember." Memory also plays a role in the life of the individual. It is a test of man's character whether he follows only the daily events, or whether the past is alive in his present. There is hardly a man who does not experience during his lifetime a glimpse of the reality of God. The remembrance of such an experience is the force which sustains faith. There is a difference between belief and faith; the first is a relation to ideas, and the second, to God. Belief is expressed in cold judgment, but faith in attachment and action, and thus brings one closer to God.

In the second part, Heschel deals with the problem of living a

religious life. In human life, says he, needs play an exceptional role; they move the will and arouse a desire for their satisfaction. In fact, man is a cluster of needs, and as a result, they are considered today as if they were holy, but the case is not so. The only need the satisfaction of which may raise spirituality is the one to subdue evil within us, but few people pay attention to this need. Needs are not measured by the interest which man displays in attempting to satisfy them, for interests are not always right. To live rightly, man must strive not to satisfy his own needs, but to be needed. In other words, instead of being an end, he should try to be a need so that other people should value him for his own sake. He should therefore ask himself, am I needed by other men? Another way to make life worth while is to make it lasting. The lives of men are strands of time, and men should endeavor to integrate these strands into a design of an eternal fabric by their acts and striving, for nothing is really lost in eternity.

The last chapters are devoted to a definition of the Jewish religion. There are a number of religious ideas and views which Judaism emphasizes. First is the awareness of God's interest in man. In fact, it can be said that, according to Judaism, life is a partnership of God and man, for He is not indifferent to our joys and sorrows. The Bible and the Talmud frequently state that when Israel obeys the will of God, they strengthen Him, and if they disobey, they weaken Him. The second is that a moral obligation must be stronger than all other obligations, especially greater than the power of selfish interests. In fact, it must be endowed with the highest passion of the spirit, and man should derive pleasure in the performance of a good deed. The third is that man must possess a yearning for spiritual living and strive to transform his soul into a vessel wherein the presence of God should dwell.

These are the leading thoughts on the philosophy of religion presented by Heschel in his work which extends for over three hundred pages. They are imbedded in a form saturated with poetic flare and abounding with numerous digressions, both of which make it difficult for the reader to grasp their essence, for it becomes almost ineffable. The thoughts presented undoubtedly echo the message of any great religion, and particularly of Judaism, for they are rooted in the Bible and in a great part of the post-biblical literature, especially in the mystical trend. There is also heard in them an echo of Bergson's view on the origin of religion. However, as for the certainty which

Heschel's attributes to the feeling of the ineffable, it can be said that this is a matter of individual response. Not every man is equally impressed with that certainty. Reason, therefore, in the field of religion, cannot be dispensed with. Even the most religiously inspired Jewish thinkers, such as Bahya, had to resort to reason in order to buttress the feeling of certainty.

Heschel wrote also another work, *The Sabbath*, which can be characterized as a hymn to the Sabbath Day. In it the beauty of the form is impressive, and the attempt in the content to delineate the exceptional value of the Sabbath to humanity in general, and to the Jews in particular, as reflected in Jewish thought, literature, and legend, is a worthy one.

In his usual way, Heschel starts with a basic point which throws light on the subject he intends to discuss. In this case, it is the difference between the relation of man to space and to time. Technical civilization, says he, is primarily an attempt to conquer space. Similarly, in all ancient religions, space occupies a most important role of sacredness, and holiness was always attached to places. Judaism, on the other hand, is a religion of time and aims at its sanctification, and its main theme, that of faith, lies in the realm of time. The Sabbath and holy days are Judaism's cathedrals, and the Day of Atonement, the holiest shrine.

It is from this point of view that the author endeavors to bring out the greatness and the glory of the Sabbath and its effect on life. He labels the Sabbath a palace in time, for on observing the Sabbath, man enters into a palace filled with spiritual beauty; were there no Sabbath, the world would be incomplete. Verily do the rabbis ask, why does the Torah say, "On the seventh day God finished His work" (Genesis II:2)? Did it not state before that on the sixth day God finished His work? Their answer is that the Sabbath itself is a special act of creation to complete the world. Without the Sabbath, it would be separate from spirituality, from God Himself. In the six week days, the soul is somewhat neglected, but on the Sabbath it comes into its own and holds a celebration, inviting the body to join in that celebration. It is celebrated by *Menuḥah*, rest, which signifies not only repose from labor, but serenity and peace of the spirit.

It is this conception of *Menuḥah* which is as the author of the Book of the Pious (Sefer Ḥassidim\*) points out, the reason why

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\* Cf. on Sefer Ḥassidim, Volume 1, p. 360 bf.

twelve benedictions are left out of the *Shemoné Esré* (Eighteen Benedictions) prayer on the Sabbath, for these contain references to worry or grief, while the Sabbath was given by God for joy and delight. In fact the term *Menuhah* became in later times a synonym for the World to Come, for eternal life, and the rabbis did say that the Sabbath is a sample of that life.

The Sabbath does not point to a depreciation of labor, but on the contrary, it is an affirmation of labor's dignity. The statement, "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord" (Exodus, XXXI:15) joins both labor and rest in one command as duties which man is to perform. The seventh day is the armistice in man's cruel struggle for existence, and calls for peace between man and man, man and nature, and peace in the soul of man.

In Heschel's endeavor to bring out the many-phased values of the Sabbath, he quotes a Talmudic allegory in which we are told that the Sabbath complained to God that it has no mate, while each of the other six days has its mate, but Sabbath stands alone. God said, "Israel will be thy mate," and Israel had accepted it and pays great honor to the Sabbath, calling it Queen and Bride. These names, says our author, are not intended as personifications of the Sabbath, but express ideas. The name illustrates the meaningfulness of the Sabbath in its two aspects, to God and to man. It is meaningful to God, for without it there would be no holiness in the world; and it is meaningful to man, for it serves him as a source of holiness. God commanded man to pay honor to the Sabbath day, and the rabbis therefore call it Queen to symbolize the honor due it. The Sabbath is also a sign of the presence of God in the world. It is therefore possible for the soul to respond in affection and enter into fellowship with that Presence through the observance of the consecrated day. Hence, the title bride, bestowed upon it by the sages of Israel, symbolizes the love with which the Jewish people are to meet the Sabbath, just as a groom meets his bride. The author continues to sing of the glories of the Sabbath, showing how Israel joined its very destiny with that day. We are told in the Mishnah of the songs the Levites sang in the Temple, and a list of the various Psalms sung on each day of the week is given. On the Sabbath, the ninety-second Psalm, *A Song for the Sabbath*, was sung. The Mishnah then adds, "it is a song also for the future, the day which will be a holy Sabbath and will bring rest in life everlasting." In later times, the poet Solomon

Alkabetz, in *Lekab Dodi* (Come My Beloved), which is sung in all synagogues in the Friday night service, devotes six of the nine stanzas it contains, to sing of the future redemption of Israel. The Sabbath is thus the very symbol of the eternal existence of Israel in time.

## ii. SAMUEL BELKIN

*Essays in Traditional Jewish Thought* by Samuel Belkin discusses among other things, the failure of education of the present day, pointing to the Jewish conception of education which emphasizes that learning should not be pursued for the material advancement that it may bring, but should be pursued for its own sake (Torah li-Shmah). In other words, it should serve as a means for developing a personality which should look to the eternal and permanent in life.

In another essay, in which he delineates the view of Jewish tradition that the main function of both parent and teacher in the training of children is to mold their characters he says that the problem of juvenile delinquency with which we are struggling today is primarily a problem of parental delinquency. The parents today concentrate on providing for the children all material benefits, but fail to devote attention to the spiritual and moral aspects of their character. Similarly are the teachers delinquent in this matter. A teacher of science was expounding the Darwinian theory that man is distantly related to the ape. A student protested against this theory and said, "but teacher, there are so many differences between an ape and a man." "But there are so many likenesses," answered the teacher. Against this supposed likeness between man and beast, Belkin places the Hebraic view which emphasizes the likeness between man and God, and reflects on the benefits which would accrue to humanity if we could infuse the modern system of education with the spirit of the Jewish view of man.

Discussing the view of Reform Judaism as well as of other trends in modern Jewish life which glorify the high spirituality of Judaism and its ethical ideals, but overlook the importance of its practice in daily life, Belkin calls such tendencies an attempt to disembowel the soul of Judaism from its body. Judaism, says he, has always insisted on infusion of spirit into the material, in the creation of unity between the material world and the spiritual, or between body and soul. All fine utterances about the value of Judaism have little significance as long as they are separated from its body, the observance of the divine law in daily life.

Turning, in another essay, to the great emphasis placed in American Jewish life on social activity, and deploring the ignorance of Jewish knowledge of all those who direct and administer such activity, he quotes an interesting statement by the famous philosopher, Philo of Alexandria. He says: "in the Ten Commandments, the duties of man to God and the duties of man to his fellow men were merged into one divine revelation. The purpose was to indicate that only when one accepts both types of duties does one practice Judaism in its totality." Otherwise it is only a half-Judaism.

The practice of only a half-Judaism, says Belkin in an essay on the integration of the Jewish community into a non-Jewish world, will raise a difficult problem for the continuation of the integrity of the Jewish group. The ideal Jewish community is one which joins with the larger community in all communal efforts, but preserves its identity by the distinctness of its own life. In fact, asserts Belkin, the concept of the election of Israel has little to do with race superiority, but emphasizes primarily the distinctiveness of Jewish life and the endeavor to carry out its highly disciplined spirituality in daily conduct.

These are illustrations of the traditional thought expressed in these essays besides other discussions on various phases and problems of Jewish life in this country.

### iii. ABRAHAM I. KATCH

To the many books written abroad and in this country which aim to show the great influence of Judaism upon Islam or Mohammedanism, there was recently added one more, *Judaism in Islam* by Abraham I. Katch. The author states in his introduction that he does not intend to discuss in detail the theological and philosophical doctrines of the two religions. He aims to relate, wherever possible, Mohammed's single utterances to their Rabbinic sources. For this purpose he chose two Suras, the second and the third, for a detailed study, for says he, they are the most representative of the Koran, especially the second *Al-Baqarah* (The Cow) which is frequently described as the Koran in miniature.

On the whole, his study is primarily in the field of the Talmudic Agada, in which study he shows how numerous Rabbinic statements, as well as legends, were utilized by Mohammed in his Koran. However, the field of Halakah or laws and precepts given in the Koran, which were either borrowed completely or with modification from

Judaism is not missing. Some of these are especially clarified by Katch. Thus, scholars were baffled at the source of the Islamic institution of five prayers a day. It could not have been taken, they thought, from the Jews, for they pray only three times a day. Katch quotes the opinion of the late Professor L. Ginzberg in his study on the Palestinian Talmud, that there is a basis for this number in that Talmud. It seems that the Palestinian scholars separated the reading of the *Shema* from the eighteen benedictions which is usually termed *Tefillah* (Prayer). The *Shema*, with its benedictions, was read at dawn and the morning prayer later, and in the evening, the *Shema* was read at the appearance of the stars, and followed later by the *Tefillah*. Considering such separation, we have then five prayers, two in the morning and two in the evening to which the afternoon prayer or *Minhab* is to be added. However, later, so that the congregation would not have to gather twice, the *Shema* and the *Tefillah* were joined into one and recited at the same time and thus became three. It is therefore possible that the Jews in Arabia followed the early Palestinian way of prayer, and hence Mohammed or maybe his immediate followers borrowed this way of prayer from them.

That Mohammed forbade the eating of animals which were not slaughtered and also the eating of blood and the flesh of swine is expressly stated in the Koran, and that all these prohibitions are borrowed from the Bible is well known. Our author finds that Mohammed also required the mention of the name of God before slaughtering the animal, following the Talmudic commandment that a benediction should be said before the act. The Muslims repeat the formula *Bismillah* (In the Name of God) before the slaughtering of the animals. Other Mohammedan laws borrowed both from the Bible and the Talmud are discussed in the work, such as keeping apart from a woman during the menstrual period, and the prohibition against a divorced woman marrying before the passage of ninety days. The first is taken distinctly from the Bible, and the second from the Talmud. The reason for waiting three months before remarriage is that the parentage of the child born later could be determined. Mohammed, hoping that the Jews would follow his message, had first instituted the Day of Atonement as the most important fast day, calling it *Ashura*, but later abandoned it and substituted the month of Ramadan, thirty days of fasting. Some scholars claim that it is modeled after the Lenten fast of the Christians. Katch suggests that it is patterned after the Jewish month of



Elul which is a month of penitence, and many pious Jews do much fasting during that month.

The influence of Jewish Agada on numerous statements which express Mohammed's views on life, religion, and ethics is dealt with at length by the author, and he traces their source to Rabbinic statements. We will mention a few. He finds reference to the *Kaddish* in one of Mohammed's statements. The whole conception of charity in the Koran is borrowed from Judaism, and even the terminology is borrowed, such as, "by giving *Sadakah* (charity) man becomes a creditor of God," which is taken from Proverbs, XIX:17, though Mohammed does not give the source. Again, Mohammed states that punishment in hell is limited to a certain number of days, but does not give the exact number. Katch points to the source as the Mishnah 10 in chapter II of the tractate *Eduyot*, where two views are given. Akiba says that the punishment in hell extends for twelve months, while Johannan ben Nuri limits it to seven weeks. He also shows that the leading three names of God employed in the Koran, *Rab Alomin* (Lord of the World), *Rahman* (Merciful), and *Melik* (King) are the counterparts of Talmudic terms, *Ribbon Alomim*, *Ha-Rahaman*, and *Melek*; and similarly there are many other names and divine epithets borrowed from Talmudic literature. Then, too, the several stories told in the Koran about the creation of man, how God consulted the angels on the matter, and that some opposed his creation; how later, after he was created and gave names to the animals, God asked the angels to name them, but they could not, and He told Adam to inform the angels, are taken from the Midrash. Katch also traces other statements in the two Suras containing legendary accounts of the lives of the Patriarchs and other great historical figures to various sources in the Talmud and Midrash. Thus, our knowledge about the influence of Judaism on Islam is much increased by the work of Dr. Katch.

#### iv. JACOB MINKIN

Much has been written during the last twenty-five years on Maimonides and his teachings, especially during the years following the celebration of the seven hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his death. But most of these books are either too scholarly or too popular, but Jacob Minkin, in *The World of Maimonides*, seemed to have found the golden mean between the two extremes. It is both popular and scholarly, and the intelligent reader as well as the student can

profit by its use. It is divided into two parts, *The World of Moses Maimonides* and *The Teachings of Maimonides*, which consists of a large number of excerpts from his works.

The first part, covering over one hundred and fifty-six pages, is both an embrative biography of the vicissitudes of his life, and an evaluation of his great literary and intellectual contribution. The title, *The World of Moses Maimonides*, is most appropriate, for it is not a mere biography recording events and episodes in his life, but a fine portrayal of the entire environment of the world in which he moved and acted, and in order to open the gates to this world, even to those who are not entirely at home in Jewish history and Jewish literature, Minken widens the canvas and devotes pages to subjects which are not entirely relevant to the biography proper. Thus, preceding the description of the flight of Maimon and his family from Cordova, when the Almohades arrived, he gives a brief but embrative survey of the position of the Jews in Muslim Spain before 1148, the year of the flight. Discussing the Yemen letter of Maimonides, he devotes a number of pages to the history of the Jews in Yemen and to the conditions which brought about the appeal of the Yemenite Jews to Maimonides for guidance and spiritual help, to which his letter was the response. Preceding his evaluation of Maimonides' commentary on the Mishnah, he describes the Mishnah, its nature, character, as well as its division into six orders and their content. Nor is an appreciation of the work of the editor, Judah the Prince, missing. All this is done to enable the non-scholarly reader to appreciate the permanent value of this great work.

The evaluation of Maimonides' contribution is complete; hardly any of his works are left out. Even his medical works are dealt with in a brief chapter. The descriptions of these important works bring out forcibly their originality, their breadth, and their influence on the generations. Of value is the chapter on the great controversy which arose around the Mishne Torah or Code, a subject little dealt with in other biographies, in which the reasons for the opposition to it are given, the portrayal of the character of the leading opponents delineated, and excerpts from the letters of Maimonides in which he states the reason for its composition and the purpose of his method are quoted.

The second part, which is really a selected anthology from the works of Maimonides, possesses great merit. It is distinguished by the logical arrangement of the subjects around which the excerpts

are grouped. The conception of God in its various aspects heads the list, creation of the world by God, and the nature of the world. The relation of God to man and to life, expressed in His providence, and the grant of free will to man, man's use of freedom, the evil that may result from such use, and man's return to God by repentance, follow. These are succeeded by other subjects, such as Torah, reward and punishment, the Messiah and the world to come, and subsidiary subjects. In short, there is not a subject in the extensive works of Maimonides which is not illustrated by large groups of excerpts. Great skill is evident in the arrangement and the grouping of the selections around the subjects, for the passages which deal with the same subjects are scattered in many works. Sometimes the subject is dealt with at length, and sometimes it is referred to in a few lines in a chapter devoted to an entirely different matter. Much effort was required to bring together hundreds of passages, remarks, and statements and weld them into a systematic presentation of the teachings of Maimonides and thus present a portrayal of the inner world of Maimonides, the world of his mind and soul.

#### vi. MORDECAI WAXMAN

A work which in its external form resembles the preceding one, but differs essentially in its content and aim for it presents the views and ideology not of an individual but of a very large section of American Jewry known as Conservative, is *Tradition and Change*, edited by Mordecai Waxman. It contains an introductory essay on Conservative Judaism by the editor and an anthology of selected essays and addresses by a number of leaders and thinkers of that movement.

The survey or introduction by the editor covers thirty-seven pages, which, on the whole, can be considered brief but nevertheless comprehensive. It is well arranged and suits the purpose which the writer set for himself, namely to illuminate Conservative Judaism. He begins by offering the reason for the rise of the movement, which he attributes to the religious division of American Jewry at the end of the nineteenth century. At that time there were two primary groups. One followed the Reform movement, eliminating the larger part of Jewish religious practice along with the national element and emphasizing the ethical aspect. The second group clung to the East European type of orthodoxy. There was also a small group of Americanized Jews who had nevertheless been raised in Jewish tradition.

This group could not join either of the two. The leaders of this group, Sabato Morais, Marcus Jastrow, and Pereira Mendes, to name a few, determined to halt the Reform movement and strengthen their conception of Judaism by founding an institution or seminary for training rabbis and teachers for American Jewry. They did not intend to found another "party" in Jewry. Several of them even proposed that the Seminary should be called an Orthodox Seminary, hoping to unite the larger parts of American Jewry. However, says the writer, their hopes were not realized along these lines, and the ultimate success of this group was achieved by creating a party or a distinct group in American religious Judaism.

Waxman then points out the cause which led to this success. An important factor was the change wrought by conditions in America which influenced the pattern of daily life enjoyed by the mass of East European immigrants during the first three decades of this century. An even greater change was developing among their children, born and raised in this country. Not only did they achieve economic success, but many of them hardly observed the practice of the precepts of Judaism. Yet, in spite of that, the millennial tradition of life in which they were raised had a strong hold on them and they endeavored to gratify it at certain times of the year, be it the High Holy Days, or Passover, or at special events in life, such as the death of a relative or the birth of a son. They could not join the Reform movement. It was Conservatism which offered them a return to some of the Jewish traditions. Hence the spread of that movement.

The writer concentrates on the delineation of the ideology of Conservatism. He points out that its founders and leaders for a long time have insisted that it is not a party or a denomination in Jewry. "It intends," says he, "to continue the Jewish tradition along its path in time, but with its characteristic dynamism, for Conservatism recognizes the pressure created by the American Jewish scene and by the modern world. As a result it posits that the Jewish tradition must be preserved and conserved, and that American Jewry must be molded to that end." Therefore it did not evolve a doctrine, but emphasizes several aspects of Judaism.

The first of these is the millennial view held by *Klal Yisrael*, i.e., the totality of Israel, or in Schechter's modern form *Catholic Israel*, namely, that "God, Torah, and Israel are one." This form stresses the close relationship between faith in God and His primacy in life

and history; the Torah as a means of coming close to Him through thought and actions; and the loyalty to Jewish people and its history through which faith and actions are carried on. Reform Judaism, says the author, to a large degree weakens the power of the Torah; strict Orthodoxy does not heed the needs of the people. Conservatism undertook to restore the balance. For those who do not understand Hebrew, a few English readings are introduced, but the greater part of the service is in Hebrew. Similarly, the national element of Judaism is strongly emphasized.

The second aspect of the movement is attention to the historical past of Israel, emphasized by Zechariah Frankel in the middle of the nineteenth century. This trend cultivates respect for the Jewish past and its guiding principles, chief of which was pointed out by Saadia Gaon: "Israel is a nation only by virtue of its Torah." Respect for the character of the past means respect for the religious legal system which was the means of preserving Judaism. However, says the writer, historical Judaism recognizes the possibility of change in certain matters which do not affect any essential phases of Judaism, and it points to the fact that such changes were effected through the ages, and what is more by means of the tradition itself. He quotes a few instances. The surveyor continues to discuss the awareness of the Conservative movement of modern thought, and the attempt it makes to confront it and harmonize with, or disprove it, and the caution with which it approaches the question of changes. He further points out that all changes must be initiated by an authoritative body of rabbis and scholars and based on a sound interpretation of the law.

In the last chapter, Waxman presents a complete account of the organizational structure of the Conservative movement, discussing the activities of its several organs, the Seminary and its efforts to spread Jewish knowledge, the striving of the United Synagogue to widen the use of the synagogue building and make it a community center in which not only services should be conducted, but also educational and social activities, and, finally, the attempts by the Rabbinical Assembly and its various committees to strengthen the movement by clarifying its ideology. He dwells on the last phase of activity and points out that, due to the great increase of the membership and the rise of certain trends in religious thinking, there arose in that Assembly a diversity in point of view. As a result, the Assembly now consists of three different groups: a left represented by the so-called Reconstructionists which is relatively small but

active; a right which is still smaller, but has the backing of the Seminary faculty; and a center group to which the overwhelming majority of the Assembly belong. This well-arranged survey presents to us an embrative account of the Conservative movement from its very beginning to the present day in its historical, ideological, and organizational aspects.

The anthology which forms the bulk of the book and extends over four hundred thirty pages is divided into three parts, each of which deals with a phase of the movement. The first, devoted to the historical aspect, is subdivided into two sections; "The History of an Idea," containing a number of essays by the earlier protagonists of Conservatism, from Zechariah Frankel to Solomon Schechter and Louis Ginzberg, delineates the various steps in the formation of the ideology of Conservatism. In these the value of Torah and loyalty to the past Jewish life is greatly emphasized. Thus, Professor Israel Friedlander in his essay "The Problem of Judaism in America," expressing dissatisfaction with its state says, "While our heart is aroused over the martyrs who fell at the hands of violent mobs, we witness with indifference that for which they became martyrs." It is worth while to note that it was his fate to fall by the same hands on his mission to the Ukraine on behalf of the Joint Distribution Committee in order to determine the extent of help needed by Ukrainian Jewry. It is true that these essays also stress the need for some reconciliation of the Torah with modern conditions, but, simultaneously, insist on great caution in the attempt to make changes. Professor Ginzberg, in "Our Standpoint" expresses a warning in his statement: "We today live partly on the shadow of the past, and one shudders at the thought that those who will come after us will have to live on the shadow of the shadow."

The second section, "The History of A Movement," containing essays and addresses by both older and younger leaders, deals with descriptions of various facets in the realization of Conservatism from a trend into a new movement.

The second part, "Philosophies of Conservative Judaism," contains essays by Dr. Kaplan (the founder of Reconstructionism), by several of his followers, and by others. In these essays, the value of Torah or loyalty to the past tradition receives little attention with the exception of the essay by Dr. Louis Finkelstein, where the demand for adjustment to modern conditions is emphasized. Judaism is usually defined in sociological terms. Dr. Mordecai Kaplan stresses

"the primacy of religion as the expression of a collective Jewish life," and further defines its purpose as follows, "Our collective life as a people must be deliberately activated as a means of enabling the individual Jew to achieve his destiny as a human being." Another essayist presents his program for American Judaism in one sentence thus: "Judaism is the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people." Lack of space prevents us from analyzing these definitions in some detail. We can only remark that a Judaism so defined could not withstand the severe onslaughts upon it during the ages, nor can it face the embrasive pressure of the modern environment and maintain the essential integrity of its character.

The third part, "Attitudes of Conservative Judaism," contains essays by younger rabbis dealing primarily with planned changes in the prayer-book and in Sabbath laws. The legal changes advocated are not fundamental, and are limited primarily to the question of riding to the synagogue on the Sabbath and the use of electricity on that day. In "The Responsum on the Sabbath" written jointly by Rabbis M. Adler, J. Agus, and T. Friedman, the writers claim that riding on the Sabbath to the synagogue is permitted. They quote statements from the Talmud and Rabbinic writings which, according to their interpretation, strengthen their view. They ultimately assert that such permission "is as clear as the sun." There is only one essayist, Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, who doubts this clarity, claiming that you cannot set limits to riding; once one rides for the sake of a Mitzwah, it will be extended for other purposes, even *le-Shem Oneg* (Pleasure).

Taking the work as a whole we can say that, while one may disagree with a number of views expressed therein as well as with the advisability of planned changes in Jewish law, the introduction and the large number of essays and addresses present a wide vista of religious thought of a movement which embraces a large part of American Jewry. In this consists its value and worth.

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